Edmund Morris's Unoriginal Sins RYAN LIZZA

THE NEW REPUBLIC

Jersey's Richest Liberal
JOHN B. JUDIS

Cash and the Campaign
DANA MILBANK, JOHN MUELLER

ovember 15, 1999

Inflated Rhetoric

Why men don't need Susan Faludi to pump them up

By JAMES WOLCOTT

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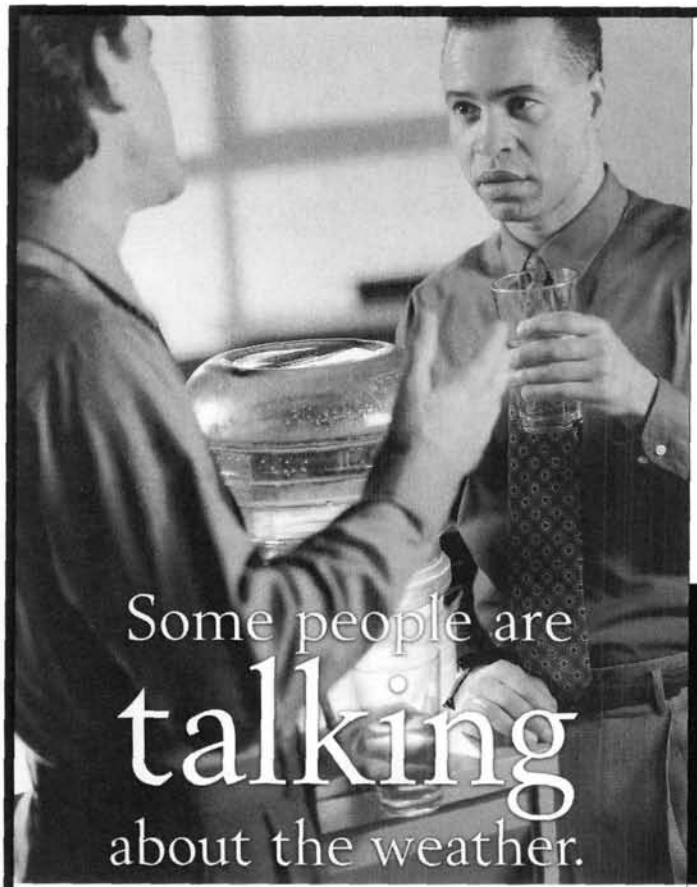

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CORRESPONDENCE

Online learning

TO THE EDITORS:

Compliments to Nicholas Confessore for his overview of distance learning ("The Virtual University," October 4). I predict that the next step in the evolution of U.S. higher education will be one that takes us even further back into education's origins: the creation of the accredited, entrepreneurial professor, a modern cognate of the learned person around whose feet learners once gathered.

Why should the best teachers be part of universities when they can reach students directly? If they are good enough, they will be able simply to contract with colleges for transcription and financial aid services in order to teach thousands of students. Faculty will soon figure this out and start clamoring to be accredited as individuals. Why not? That's essentially how we authorize people to teach in secondary education and to practice professions such as law, medicine, and architecture. Professors will incorporate themselves as teaching companies and become privateers on the seas of academe.

Confessore notes that online learning may not provide the same experience as that available at the University of California at Los Angeles. The same experience: no. The experience includes more than formal learning, and that's why most college-age students will still look to campuses for higher education. But regarding the "content"—why shouldn't it be the same, if experienced professors are offering it?

ALAN L. CONTRERAS
Eugene, Oregon

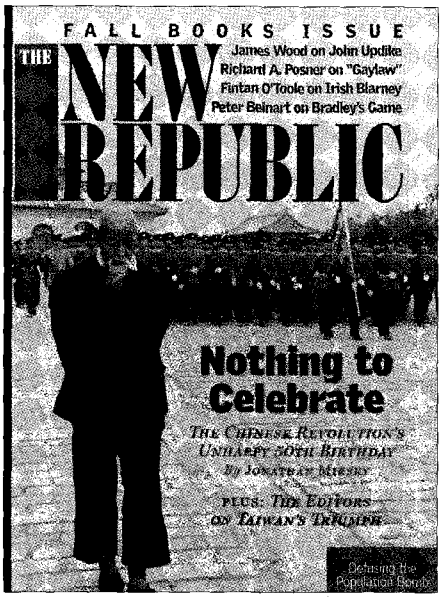
Not phony

TO THE EDITORS:

Jacob Heilbrunn's otherwise strong critique of Patrick Buchanan ("Absolving Adolf," October 18) contains a factual error that could give Buchanan and other apologists for Nazi war criminals unintended succor. Heilbrunn writes, "Though the documents purportedly proving [John Demjanjuk] to be Ivan the Terrible turned out to be KGB forgeries, the investigation did reveal that he had been a guard at the Sobibor death camp." Critics of war-crimes prosecutions have often invoked the possibility of KGB forgeries (a plausible concern in light of the KGB's fecund record of forgery), but, in fact, there is no known case of such a forgery in U.S. war-crimes proceedings.

In the Demjanjuk case, there were no documents, forged or otherwise, identifying Demjanjuk as Ivan, the notorious guard at Treblinka. This identification rested entirely on the testimony of eyewitnesses. There was documentary evidence that was found to be corroborative insofar as it showed that Demjanjuk had been a *Wachmann*, or member of the corps of death-camp guards. The Israel Supreme Court's decision to overturn Demjanjuk's conviction was based on additional documents, discovered after his trial, that cast doubt on the eyewitness testimony placing him at Treblinka. At the same time, other newly discovered documents furnished additional proof that Demjanjuk had in fact been a guard at other camps. As the court stated in its decision: "The contentions [of the defense team] with regard to forgery of the Trawniki certificate in the light of the experts' testimony and in the light of the other evidence are reduced to zero."

JOSHUA MURAVCHIK
Via the Internet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THE NEW REPUBLIC
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Nothing to Celebrate
THE CHINESE REVOLUTION'S UNHAPPY 50TH BIRTHDAY
PLUS: THE EDITORS ON TAIWAN'S DILEMMA
Defusing the Population Bomb

Knick knock

TO THE EDITORS:

I found Peter Beinart's article on Bill Bradley ("Game Boy," October 11) quite interesting, particularly since no one really takes Bradley to task for making such potentially disingenuous statements. However, I do think that Beinart needs to consider his subject matter more before he can begin to compare Bradley with other athletes-turned-politicians (Jack Kemp, Steve Largent) and call him "naïve" for claiming to understand African Americans.

For one thing, basketball, unlike football, requires a great deal of intimacy between players, who must form a tight physical and mental bond to complete a variety of tasks. Football, which allows for a much greater number of players, lacks this amount of intimacy. This is not to say that football players are less team-oriented, but the rules of the game simply dictate that team members play more individual roles.

Additionally, one must understand the cultures of the two sports. Basketball has always been an urban game, despite heroic portrayals in the media of Indiana and Kentucky high school contests and the like. Football, however, is a more rural game. With this in mind, I can see how Bradley could have developed a more "liberal" view of the plight of African Americans, since many of his teammates came directly from urban ghettos. On the other hand, Largent may have been surrounded by people who were Southern, rural, and more conservative, regardless of their ethnicity or race.

Although I agree that Bradley should be questioned regarding his claim of "understanding" African Americans more than other whites who have worked intimately with them do, it is not surprising that he clearly recognizes where many of these black athletes came from and how their urban neighborhoods could be greatly improved through a more traditionally liberal social policy.

MATT MOSHEN
New York, New York

TO THE EDITORS:

There is something peculiar about the "empirical" argument Peter Beinart offers to explain why interracial experience does not necessarily lead to increased concern about racism. To prove his point, Beinart offers two examples: military officers and Steve Largent.

Beinart writes that, because many white officers serve in an integrated military and yet vote Republican (and therefore are unconcerned about race), the idea that contact with minorities leads to concern for their plight is empirically flawed. The problem with this argument is that it ignores other background characteristics that affect one's position on race relations in the United States.

The essential question is not whether these officers are more concerned about race relations than the average American (or, more appropriately, the average edu-

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The Kind of Campaign Finance Reform Congress Wouldn't Talk About – But Should.

Here we are again, having just watched Congress go through its ritual dance, pretending to make a serious effort at campaign finance reform.

Once again, the dance has ended in the way it always does: the music stops and nothing happens.

That's why the American Civil Liberties Union and Public Campaign – two organizations deeply involved in campaign reform, often on opposing sides – have come together to promote a bold, comprehensive solution.

For a quarter century, the debate in Congress has been confined to two approaches: either imposing more limits on contributions to candidates and political parties and on spending by others, or eliminating limits altogether and relying solely on disclosure of major contributions.

However, both leave us with a campaign finance system based solely or primarily on private contributions from a relatively few sources. Both continue to exclude from the electoral marketplace many candidates who might make fine public officials but who lack personal wealth or access to the wealth of others, and who are therefore unable to make their case to the voters. And one of the two approaches – the attempt to impose more limits – raises constitutional questions that have led courts to strike down reform initiatives for over 25 years.

These approaches will not provide the fundamental change that is needed. But there is a third way.

We should provide an alternative and parallel system of adequate and equitable public financing for candidates willing to opt out of the privately-financed system and, as the Supreme Court has permitted, limit their spending to the amount of public financing they receive.

Public financing would enhance electoral competition. It would allow a wider range of candidates to make their case to the voters. It would make public officials more accountable to voters in general and less accountable to the often narrow economic interests of a few big contributors. And it would allow public officials to do their job instead of spending huge amounts of time raising money.

Private citizens and political parties used to print their own ballots until it was recognized that the integrity of the electoral process required the government to pay for printed ballots. For the same reason, public funds pay for polling booths, voting machines, and registrars, not to mention the salaries of public officials. It is time to apply the same logic to funding election campaigns.

The ACLU and Public Campaign believe that a voluntary system of full public financing is the only comprehensive reform that can both remedy the problem and withstand constitutional scrutiny. We need to begin discussing what that would mean, and addressing the many details that would have to be worked out. So far, neither Congress nor the White House seems interested.

But the rest of us should be.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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American Civil Liberties Union
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New York, NY 10004
www.aclu.org

PUBLIC CAMPAIGN
Public Campaign
1320 19th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036
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cated and professional American) is, but whether they are more concerned about race than other people who come from similar backgrounds and have similar characteristics. The effect of serving in an integrated force could still be quite potent. A disproportionately large share of officers come from Southern communities (relative to the overall share of the white population living in the South). Might Southern white men who serve in the military be more racially tolerant than their high school and college buddies who work as lawyers, doctors, or engineers? Beinart presents nothing to answer this question, which is the one he should be asking.

The second example, that of Steve Largent, is of course vulnerable to the same critique. Who knows what Largent would have thought about race if he had never played pro sports? He might have been even more conservative.

Bill Bradley came from a moderate Midwestern community and attended an Ivy League college. To believe that his experience in professional sports sparked his self-described concern for race is not difficult. Beinart's position is not necessarily wrong, but the evidence he offers to support it is inadequate.

GEOFFREY RAPP
New Haven, Connecticut

Tax talk

TO THE EDITORS:
I would like to thank John B. Judis for mentioning me in his October 11 piece, "Taxing Issue." Understanding his liberal leanings, I took no offense to Judis's listing me among a group of "obscure right-wing apparatchiks" testifying before the Advisory Commission on Electronic Commerce in September.

Judis cited a guesstimate offered by the left-leaning Center on Budget and Policy Priorities that "states and cities could lose as much as $15 billion in sales tax revenues" by 2003 due to a shift to more catalog and Internet shopping. Of course, he then somehow went on to rule out of order my argument that Internet taxes should not be increased or expanded because state and local revenues have been rolling into state and local government coffers for decades.

Just for the record, inflation-adjusted per capita state and local government total revenues increased by 297 percent from 1962 to 1996, according to U.S. Commerce Department data (1996 is the most recent year for which figures are available). Real per capita sales and gross receipts tax revenues rose by 214 percent. More recently, from 1992 to 1996, real per capita state and local total revenues increased by twelve percent, and real per capita sales and gross receipts taxes by eleven percent.

For too long, elected officials and appointed commissions have made tax-policy decisions in a vacuum, unconcerned about the total tax burden placed on families, businesses, and the economy. Not only does government possess no inherent right to tax all aspects of commerce, but taxing the Internet—a burgeoning source of growth and jobs—is just plain stupid. After all, state and local governments will gain revenues as a result of the economic growth generated by new high-tech industries and businesses anyway.

However, if elected officials were truly concerned about the economy and jobs, they would refrain from levying more taxes on the Internet and instead explore ways to downsize government and cut existing taxes. If such a view makes me a right-wing apparatchik, so be it.

RAYMOND J. KEATING
Chief Economist
Small Business Survival Committee
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITORS:
John B. Judis's article on the Advisory Commission on Electronic Commerce contained several errors, but the most serious was his characterization of the issue as a "tax or no tax" debate. All purchases, including Internet sales, *are* subject to tax if the consumer lives in one of the 46 states with a sales tax. The debate is over *collection* of taxes owed on purchases from out-of-state sellers. It revolves around state and local political decisions and basic constitutional principles.

State and local officials do not want to tell their constituents that they owe tax on out-of-state purchases. Rather, they want to have expanded powers to force out-of-state businesses to do the collecting. That's an understandable political decision, but it discriminates against out-of-state commerce. While local merchants deal with just one tax system, state and local officials want remote sellers to deal with every system.

The Constitution prohibits states from imposing undue burdens on interstate commerce because the Articles of Confederation collapsed under the proliferation of discriminatory state taxes and import duties. The Supreme Court has ruled that states cannot impose tax-collection obligations beyond their borders, because the collective burdens on one national seller that had to comply with every state and local tax system would be too great. Because Congress has ultimate authority over interstate commerce, the states seek a federal law that overturns this basic constitutional principle.

The Internet's dynamism both derives from and realizes our Founding Fathers' vision of an unfettered national common market. Accordingly, increased tax burdens on Internet sellers will harm everyone, especially entrepreneurs who confront barriers in the "traditional" marketplace. The Internet is color-blind, and it offers new opportunities for all businesses, including those owned by minorities and women, to prosper. Small businesses that make use of the Internet have grown 46 percent faster than those that do not.

The Internet tax issue involves fundamental policy choices—whether state and local taxing authority should be nationalized, whether a fundamental constitutional principle should be overturned, and whether state and local services can be maintained in an e-commerce world. I hope that TNR will write more on this subject (including how the e-commerce boom has helped generate state and local surpluses), as it is truly one of the most important policy choices confronting the nation today. For my part, I do not view the Internet and the Constitution as threats, and I will aggressively fight attempts to impose an Articles of Confederation framework on our twenty-first-century economy.

STANLEY S. SOKUL
Davidson & Company
Member, Advisory Commission on Electronic Commerce
Washington, D.C.

JOHN B. JUDIS REPLIES:
Stanley S. Sokul serves on the commission as a business representative from the Association for Interactive Media—a subsidiary of the Direct Marketing Association, the lobbying organization for direct mailers and catalog stores such as L.L. Bean. The Direct Marketing Association has been on record against allowing states to charge sales taxes on out-of-state purchases from its members, and Sokul has represented that point of view on the commission and in this letter. My view is that Congress has to ensure that out-of-state sellers do not enjoy an unfair advantage over local merchants and that states are not deprived of needed revenue as more purchases are made over the Internet or through catalogs.

TO THE EDITORS:
What is odd about the politics of Internet taxation is the apparent silence of small business and its supporters. Why, one might ask, should buying products over the Internet be favored—through tax moratoriums—over buying them at the local shop? If e-commerce is truly superior to face-to-face commerce, shouldn't it demonstrate this on a level playing field?

I am a full netizen, and I agree that tax chaos is to be avoided. But why shouldn't

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Internet purchasers pay the same taxes as those who are on the wrong side of the digital divide? And why should Web-based sellers get to sell their products at what amounts, in California, to a seven percent discount on the prices offered by local businesses, which have to charge sales tax?

MICHAEL A. JACOBS
Sausalito, California

Growth curve

TO THE EDITORS:

Gregg Easterbrook makes the point that population continues to expand due to the compounding effect of a lower rate acting on a higher base ("Reproductivity," October 11). While this fact may offer some kind of statistical condolence to those worried about future generations, there remains a similar yet less benign way to apply the same concept to the present day. The number of people existing in poverty, or the number of adults living under the yoke, or the number of children dying from diarrhea, may be, *as a percentage*, less than at any time in history. Unfortunately, given the expanded base, the total number of people living in these conditions is higher than it has ever been. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, most of the world's population of one billion may have lived in poverty, but today many times that number of people have no access to clean water, education, or even decent shelter. In other words, the sum total suffering of humanity, if I may borrow the statistician's phraseology, has reached a historical high-water mark.

JON F. FIELDER, M.D.
Baltimore, Maryland

The Taiwan wonder

TO THE EDITORS:

To supplement your editorial "Taiwan's Triumph" (October 11) regarding the islanders' political and economic achievements: Taiwan ranks nineteenth in the world in GNP, fourteenth in trade volume. In 1998, Taiwan's per capita GNP was $12,000, compared with China's $750. The U.S. trade deficit with Taiwan is nearly one-sixth smaller than its trade deficit with China. Moreover, the recent earthquake in Taiwan highlighted its significance in the global electronics market.

Contrary to China's assertion that Taiwan is a Chinese province, it is a de facto independent country. The People's Republic has never ruled Taiwan. In the nearly 400 years since Taiwan was colonized by the Dutch in 1624, the island was a Chinese province for a total of twelve years: from 1887 to 1895, when the Qing dynasty ceded Taiwan to Japan in perpetuity, and from 1945 to 1949, the year

continued on page 49

"Character is destiny."
—Heraclitus

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—Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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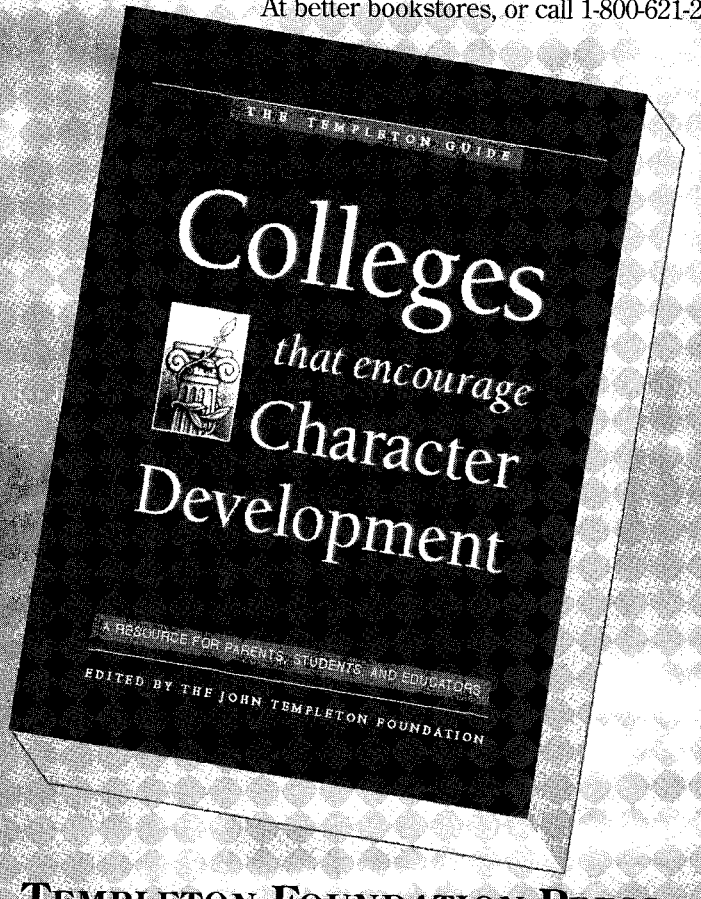

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Green Line

ARE YOU AS underexcited as I am by the subject matter of the presidential campaign so far? Do you doubt the grandiose promises being made to fix Social Security, Medicare, and education—especially since we all know that, whomever is elected, these issues will either be dealt with through mushy compromise or ignominious procrastination? Let me nominate a new issue for discussion, then, one that is highly consequential for the very structure of our constitutional system and that touches directly on a uniquely presidential function, that of commander-in-chief: the growing gap in values and perceptions between the U.S. military and the society it serves, as well as the increasingly problematic relationship between the officer corps and the civilian officials who ostensibly control them.

In theory, of course, the Constitution clearly provides for civilian control of the military. However, that control is divided between Congress, which has the power to fund the Armed Forces and declare war, and the president, who has the power to confer ranks and serves as commander-in-chief. These seemingly clear rules have obviously blurred over the years, especially the one about Congress alone declaring war. But more important is the way in which the division of civilian authority, in a post-World War II context of a large, standing military force, creates opportunities for a more or less permanent officer corps to get its way by playing off Congress against the president.

Two things happened after Vietnam to make officers more interested in playing politics. First, the all-volunteer Army turned what was once a relatively diverse and demographically fluid institution into a self-selected and, to some extent, self-perpetuating subculture. Second, the military's analysis of the failure in Vietnam emphasized the need for soldiers to have greater input in the definition of national interests and, by extension, the definition of the causes for which America should and shouldn't fight. A generation of officers took courses in history and politics, learned to lobby Congress and the White House—and both absorbed and spread the notion that the United States should be absolutely certain of sustainable public support before committing its forces to war. And nowhere was the backlash against the cultural excesses of the 1960s more evident than in the military, whose leaders increasingly began to see themselves as the last defenders of traditional American values.

What happens when a military establishment develops a sense of itself as a determinate group with its own special interests to protect—both moral interests (values that are thought to be uniquely "military" and superior to those of civilian society) and material ones (pay, benefits, housing, medical care, and, most of all, gaining control over where, when, and how soldiers will actually be called upon to risk their lives)? One consequence, seemingly, is that the military becomes more partisan. A fascinating new study by Duke University professors Richard C. Kohn and Peter Feaver has documented the growth of identification with the Republican Party among military officers. Sixty-four percent identify themselves as Republicans and conservatives, far greater percentages than U.S. society as a whole. Increasingly, career military officers (and their families) have become a Republican interest group, a reliable source of votes for Republican candidates who respond, in Congress, by taking care of soldiers the way Democrats take care of teachers. Better military pay, benefits, housing, and medical care have become Republican causes. So has the avoidance of involvement in operations such as Bosnia, Haiti, and Kosovo, which Republicans often criticize not only as foreign policy mistakes but also as undue burdens on soldiers and their families.

This trend has created obvious problems for the country under the current commander-in-chief, President Clinton—and not just because his own personal behavior has struck so many soldiers as utterly contrary to hardwired military notions of honor and individual accountability. His ill-planned effort to permit gays to serve openly in the military, which was undone by an alliance between then-Joint Chiefs Chairman Colin Powell and conservative senators, was just one instance of how the military inserted itself successfully in the policy-making process under Clinton.

More important, in attempting to articulate and implement a foreign policy built largely on the use of American military power to advance humanitarian causes abroad, Clinton has had to contend with subtle but consistent foot-dragging and quibbling by the military—one recent example being the Pentagon staff's sabotaging of the deployment of Apache helicopters to Kosovo during the air campaign. Indeed, this episode represented a disagreement within the Armed Forces themselves, between those such as General Wesley Clark, who wanted to facilitate Clinton's war in the Balkans, and others who wanted to do what they could to limit the U.S. role.

Clinton's efforts to cope with a contrary military subculture have mostly backfired. Unable to boss the brass around because of the latent alliance between the military and the Republican-controlled Congress, Clinton has tried appeasement. To an extraordinary degree, he and his foreign policy spokespersons have tried to enlist senior military officers as allies in policy debates—even to the point of authorizing Joint Chiefs Chairman John Shalikashvili and Defense Secretary William Perry to cowrite an op-ed in favor of a foreign-aid bill. Military officers have been used as instruments of "engagement" with China; indeed, Clinton's choice as the next ambassador to Beijing is a former Pacific Fleet commander, Admiral Joseph Prueher.

To be sure, the brass has always been involved in politics and bucked civilian authority to some extent—just think of General McClellan's passive-aggressive relationship with President Lincoln. Nor do I mean to suggest that military men are inherently incapable of thinking in terms of broad national goals (Presidents Washington and Eisenhower proved otherwise) or that we are on the verge of some kind of military coup. Still, during the Clinton years, the military has solidified a quasi-independent role in the shaping of defense and foreign policy that should at least cause us to reflect on the condition of our constitutional system.

The U.S. military has indeed come a long way since Vietnam. It is now appropriately recognized as one of the most competent organizations in American society. Yet the very qualities and characteristics that have made it successful in war make it uniquely ill-suited to determine policy. While the military protects our democracy, it is itself an unelected and, necessarily, internally undemocratic institution. Civilian control matters, Kohn has written, because it "allows a nation to base its values and purposes, its institutions and practices, on the popular will rather than on the choices of military leaders whose outlook, by definition, focuses on the need for internal order and external security." It is an interesting comment on the degree to which we now take military involvement in civilian decision-making for granted that none of the current crop of presidential candidates even thinks of this as an issue, much less has anything to say about it. But that, too, can change.

CHARLES LANE

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CENTRALIA DISPATCH

Hot Town

"We've got a problem," says Lamar Mervine, the 83-year-old mayor of Centralia, Pennsylvania. The problem is that the state of Pennsylvania wants to wipe Centralia off the map. And its motivation, at least at first glance, seems reasonable: the ground beneath the town is on fire.

The fire began in 1962, in the coal mines underneath Centralia. Experts say the fire could have been extinguished if the state had acted swiftly and competently, but it didn't, and the fire still burns today—giant plumes of white smoke continuously billow from the ground, which is hot to the touch. In 1983 the federal government, fearing the town was no longer safe, appropriated $42 million for the relocation of Centralia's approximately 1,200 residents.

But Mervine and roughly 30 other Centralians were unfazed by the talk of sinkholes and poisonous gases. They say the fire poses no threat at all, and they've decided to stay—much to the consternation of Pennsylvania's government, which in 1992 declared eminent domain over Centralia and seized the deeds to the homes of all the remaining residents. "I have no reason to relocate at all," Mervine tells me one morning in the living room that isn't legally his, as he sits in a well-worn recliner and gazes out the window into the distance at a mist of white smoke rising from the ground. "I like it here."

In a way, Mervine's affection for Centralia isn't hard to understand. Most of Centralia is now empty lots overgrown with grass—indeed, Mervine has decided that his primary responsibility as mayor is mowing Centralia's lawns—and the town has a green, pastoral feel that it must have lacked when coal was king. "We've gone from small-town America to state-park America," says John Comarnisky, another holdout. "People in the Poconos pay big money for this." Comarnisky actually moved to Centralia after the mine fire started; at 45, he is one of the town's youngest residents. "What's not to like?" he asks. "There used to be a gas station out my kitchen window; now there's just grass and trees. I've even got a nice long driveway," he says, pointing down the long, abandoned street that leads to his house.

But not everyone's reasons for staying put are as cheerful as Comarnisky's. Helen Womer, who has lived in Centralia for all of her 70 years, thinks she's sitting on top of a fortune—and that the relocation effort is actually a conspiracy to defraud Centralians of the coal beneath them. "If there wasn't this fortune of the purest anthracite coal in the country," she says, "everyone would still be here." As for who's behind this conspiracy, Womer will say only, "Government and big business.... I know who they are, but I'm not saying. People have been threatened for far less."

Indeed, anti-government sentiment in Centralia has grown so much in recent years that Mervine has started likening the residents' situation to that of the Branch Davidians in Waco. "Out there everybody was lying to them," he says, "and the same thing is happening here. Of course, Mervine notes one important tactical difference between Waco and Centralia: "We're not together—there's a house here and a house somewhere else. In Waco they were in just one compound. With just one family in a home, we wouldn't have much chance against an armored opposition." Nevertheless, some might put up a fight, he says. "Yeah, there are a few I wouldn't trust," adds his 83-year-old wife, Lanna.

The Centralians aren't the only ones who entertain conspiracy theories. In the town of Bloomsburg, about 25 miles away, Bill Klink, director of the Columbia County Redevelopment Authority, is overseeing the state's relocation effort. Klink is frustrated that, seven years after the state declared eminent domain, not one Centralian has been forcibly evicted; he feels it's time for action. "If it were up to me, they'd be out of there," he says. "This land belongs to the commonwealth."

But Klink says the Pennsylvania government doesn't want to do anything to improve the situation, and he has a theory about why: Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge wants to curry favor with Republican presidential front-runner George W. Bush. "Tom Ridge is considered in the top ten choices for the vice presidential nomination," Klink explains, "and I don't think that Tom Ridge wants to ruin that in any shape or form." According to Klink, Ridge won't risk a public relations disaster that might cause him to fall out of favor with Bush. "Quite frankly, I think that is what's holding him back," Klink says.

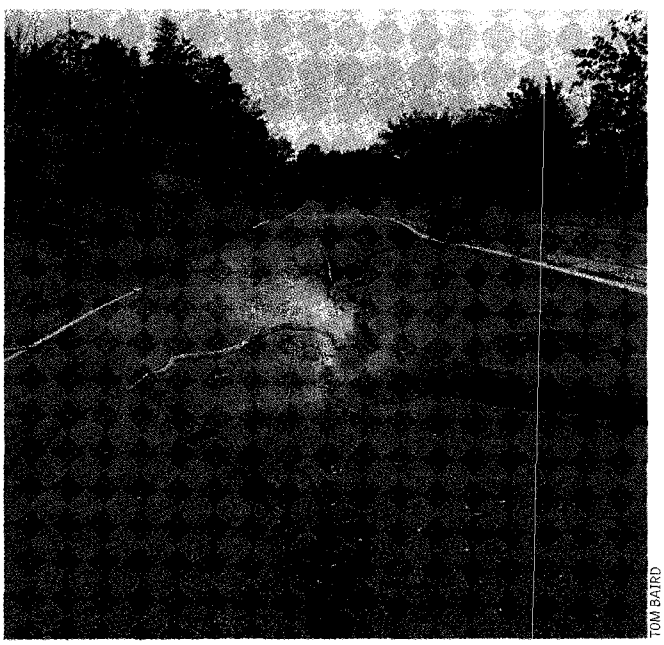
All this has forced the state to mount a "weak response" to the situation in Centralia, says Klink. "They have really not done anything dynamic to shake these people up, so to speak—to say, 'Look, you got to go.'" Making matters worse, time is running out on the availability of the money Congress appropriated for the relocation. According to Klink, the Pennsylvania government has roughly one year to decide whether to evict the remaining Centralians; otherwise, the cost of relocating them will be passed along to the state, and no one wants that. "There is going to have to be some more forcible action," Klink says.

In the meantime, Klink says the state is limited to sending Centralians notes in the mail reminding them that they have been evicted. "That's all we do right now," Klink tells me with an exasperated sigh.

Back in Centralia, the Mervines have a drawer where they keep all the letters that come from the state. But Lanna Mervine can no longer remember what the letters say. "We read them, but then we put them away and forget about them," she says.

There are, however, some reminders that Lanna has been unable to avoid. One day not so long ago, she went to get her hair done in a neighboring town. Lanna's hairdresser complained to her that Centralia's coal fire was infecting the wind with a strong stench of sulfur. "She acted like it was my fault," Lanna says.

JAKE HALPERN



TOM BAIRD

All burned up

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Doctoring the Truth

WHEN DOES LYING make you more trustworthy? When you are a physician tricking a health insurance company into approving treatment for a patient. That, at least, is what a majority of physicians seem to think nowadays, according to a study that appears in this week's edition of *Archives of Internal Medicine*. In the study, conducted by Dr. Daniel P. Sulmasy of New York Medical College in Valhalla, 58 percent of physicians said they would be willing to give an insurance company "deliberately deceptive documentation" in order to get authorization to perform heart bypass surgery or some other procedure to remedy a life-threatening malady. Physicians in parts of the country with high concentrations of health maintenance organizations (HMOs) and other forms of managed care were more likely to tell such lies than physicians in areas where HMOs were less prevalent.

Sulmasy's study was not the first to note this trend. In July, for example, the Kaiser Family Foundation reported that physicians routinely give misleading statements to insurance companies in order to secure patient reimbursement for treatments the physicians believe to be necessary. And, the study found, most physicians believe that, if such lying did not occur, substandard care would be routine, because insurance companies are so loath to approve expensive treatments.

There's a kind of analogy here to the problem of police perjury in the criminal justice system. Many cops see constitutional limitations on searches and seizures as confusing and unrealistic; this is a leading cause of "testilying"—the practice whereby police tell phony stories under oath in court to justify obtaining evidence they actually got by breaking or bending the rules. We note this neither to pass judgment on Fourth Amendment law nor to rationalize police perjury. We merely point out that, in any system where a large number of the people directly affected by the rules regard those rules as illegitimate (for whatever reason), the result is bound to be the proliferation of unlawful behavior. Corruption feeds on itself, as each lie must be covered up by another one.

What a tragedy if such a pernicious dynamic should take hold in American medicine. But that seems to be precisely what is happening as we arrive at yet another baffling chapter in America's attempts to make—or, more precisely, to avoid making—decisions about managing the health of its citizens. The reality is that good care is expensive. With populations that continually grow older, with the rapid development of technology that can prolong life at great cost, and with only so much money to go around, every society must confront difficult choices about how much money to spend and how to spend it. But Americans have generally preferred to duck the issue, making the simultaneous and usually contradictory demands that health care be both high in quality and low in cost and then letting an inconsistently regulated free market sort out how to make this possible. The result is what we have now: a system in which we demand that insurance companies find ways to cut costs, in which insurance companies do so by second-guessing physicians' decisions about treatment, and in which we all look the other way while some doctors try to work around the insurance companies' rules.

Now, for the second year in a row, Congress is considering a "patient protection" law that would set minimal standards for patient care and allow patients and their families to sue their insurance carriers if denials of coverage led to harm or death. But, even as that bill awaits consideration by a House-Senate conference committee, the business community is warning of impending increases in the already high cost of health care; insurance carriers are preparing to hike premiums by five or even ten percent this year. It's possible to imagine the quality of health care improving or the cost of health care coming down, but it's hard to imagine both of them happening simultaneously (unless, of course, health insurance would simply be offered to fewer people—an unfortunate but realistic possibility, given that the ranks of the uninsured continue to increase). Indeed, if Congress somehow manages to pass a patient-protection bill with teeth, it's a safe bet that employers and insurance companies—not doctors—will be the ones trying to game the system in order to control costs.

This cycle of deception begetting new rules begetting new deceptions could continue indefinitely. At the very best, it might someday settle at an equilibrium that somehow resembles a sensible means for allocating the money spent on medical care. Even if we're that lucky, the system will by then have already suffered a tremendous loss of integrity. Admitting that there are trade-offs between cost and quality when it comes to medicine would not be easy. It would, however, be honest—for a change. ■

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NOTEBOOK

BARED MINIMUM: In 1996, when Democrats pushed to raise the minimum wage to $5.15 per hour, Republicans fought the effort—relenting only when they had secured a series of tax giveaways to business. That victory came at a high price, though. Democrats hammered Republicans over the minimum wage issue in the elections, and it's one reason the GOP suffered at the polls. So this year, with Democrats pushing for an even higher minimum wage, the Republicans have decided to forego a suicidal crusade against the proposal. Instead, they're taking the initiative and offering minimum wage bills of their own—pre-loaded with even more tax chicanery than the 1996 bill had. A proposal by Republican Representative Rick Lazio (along with Democratic Representative Gary Condit) would raise the minimum wage to $6.45 per hour. But the bill also has these nifty provisions tucked inside: a cut in the tax rate that the very wealthy pay when they inherit from an estate, greater tax deductions for business entertainment, bigger tax breaks on 401(k) plans and private pensions, plus assorted other goodies for the very well-to-do. An analysis by the liberal watchdog group Citizens for Tax Justice found that 92 percent of the bill's tax benefits would go to the 10 percent of taxpayers with the highest incomes. Similarly, a study by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities found that the estate-tax cut would be worth $64,000 on a $1.5 million estate—which is nothing when you consider that it would be worth more than $1.7 million on a $20 million estate. (In other words, even as a percentage, it's worth twice as much to the higher-income taxpayer.) In the past, Republicans have justified attaching tax cuts to minimum wage increases as necessary balm for small businesses that might be stung by the costs of paying higher salaries to employees—an intellectually respectable, if not necessarily persuasive, argument. But many of these tax cuts don't even target small businesses—for example, Congress already allows greater exemptions for estates that include small businesses. If Congress really wanted to help small-business owners, it would be much wiser simply to raise that exemption level rather than lowering the top estate-tax rate altogether. That, however, doesn't seem to be the idea.

HAPPY HOMEOWNERS: Apparently unsettled by the bad press surrounding their inappropriate plan to have plutocratic pal Terry McAuliffe underwrite the mortgage on their new $1.7 million home in Chappaqua, New York, Bill and Hillary Clinton have now arranged alternative financing through a different bank without any help from McAuliffe. The press has basically played the first couple's new deal with a subsidiary of Pittsburgh's PNC Bank Corporation as a more normal mortgage, one that doesn't raise the difficult questions of propriety that the sweet, low-interest arrangement involving McAuliffe and New York's Bankers Trust had. But is the second mortgage really any less worthy of comment than the first? An astute October 23 article by syndicated real estate columnist Kenneth R. Harney suggests that, even if the new $1.36 million loan isn't quite as extraordinarily favorable as the McAuliffe-backed plan was, it's still far better than anything other Americans in similar situations would ever receive. First, the Clintons are making a 20 percent down payment on the $1.7 million purchase price. That's normal for ordinarily priced homes, but not, Harney notes, for houses priced at $1 million or more, on which banks ordinarily require 30 to 40 percent down payments. Also, the Clintons are not being asked to pay any "points," as is almost always required on loans of this size. Since the amount of the loan is $1.36 million, each skipped point shaves $13,600 off the cash the Clintons have to pay up front for the house. Not only that, but the Clintons are getting a lower interest rate—7.5 percent—than would normally apply to a zero-point loan of this size. In fact, after surveying various experts in the mortgage-origination business, Harney suggests that the best deal a normal rich citizen would have gotten in this case would have been 40 percent down, two points, and an interest rate of about 8.5 percent. And there's another intriguing element. The Clintons sought a three-year adjustable-rate loan, meaning that a higher interest rate will kick in three years after they move in. What does that say about the depth of the first lady's long-term commitment to living among the people she would represent in Washington?

BUSHED: No sooner had Pat Buchanan bolted the Republican Party than George W. Bush announced that Buchanan never belonged in the GOP in the first place: "Pat sees an America that should have stayed home while Hitler overran Europe and perpetrated the Holocaust. Republicans are proud of America's role in defeating Nazi Germany." But where was Bush's Republican pride back when it still looked as if Buchanan could be convinced to keep his candidacy—and his voters—within the Republican fold? While other Republican candidates denounced Buchanan's weird apologia for the Third Reich, Bush emphasized keeping the party together, Buchanan included. "It's politics," he explained. "I'm going to need every Republican vote I can get." Dubya's new campaign ads say there's too much cynicism in politics these days. There sure is.

POINTS OF PRIDE: Jesse Ventura has told most reporters that he has every intention of serving out his four-year term as Minnesota governor and foregoing next year's presidential race. But, in an October 26 interview with the editors of the student-run political magazine *The Harvard Current*, Ventura let slip that he would indeed consider a presidential run if the people of Minnesota gave him their blessing. And who were the dogged interlocutors who elicited this revelation from Ventura? Harvard University seniors Bom S. Kim and Daniel Loss, who founded the *Current* in 1998 and honed their journalistic skills as TNR reporter-researchers last summer. Great scoop, guys!

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS: Due to an editing error, Russ Baker's article on Channel One ("Changing the Channel," October 25) incorrectly described the McWhorter Group as having been "involved in developing the campaign against Channel One." The McWhorter Group helped develop the campaign in support of Channel One. We regret the error. ■

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Edmund Morris's twice-told tale.

Double Dutch

By Ryan Lizza

A month ago, the publishing world was shocked to learn that Edmund Morris, Ronald Reagan's official biographer, had inserted a trio of richly detailed fictional characters into *Dutch*, his ostensibly nonfiction biography of the former president. There is an imaginary "Edmund Morris," almost three decades older than the real author, who observes Reagan either directly or through the eyes of the two other made-up characters: a columnist named Paul Rae, and the fake Morris's radical son, Gavin.

The central literary contrivance of Morris's biography is that, while working as a lifeguard in Dixon, Illinois, in 1928, Reagan saved the life of the fictional "Edmund Morris." The rescue is described in the prologue, but the person saved is not revealed to be "Morris" until the last page of the book, when "Morris," revisiting the scene of the near-drowning, laments that he never told Reagan that he was the young man Reagan saved 70 years earlier. This device brings the narrative full circle, helping to explain the fictional Morris's deep interest in Reagan decades before the future president exhibited any hint of greatness—and decades before Random House agreed to pay him $3 million to write a biography of the two-term president.

The device also happens to be strikingly similar to the plot of a short story called "Dear Mr. President," which appeared in the Spring 1994 issue of *Story* magazine. The story's author, Daniel Voll, a New York-based short story writer and a contributing editor at *Esquire*, says that he was astonished when he picked up *Dutch*. "Was this an original device?" he asks. "No. Did he steal it from me? Who knows? But there aren't a lot of stories out there about what it's like for Ronald Reagan to blow breath into your lungs. It's a bizarre coincidence, at the very least." Morris says that he has never read Voll's short story or even heard of it, claiming that he first wrote the ending of his book in 1993—before Voll's story was published—during a visit to Reagan's hometown. Poor Morris. His book has been criticized for offering few new historical insights about Reagan, but at least he could hold up his clever literary tricks as revolutionary. "[I]n my opinion," he recently told a newspaper, "[*Dutch*] is literature rather than political biography." Now, after hearing a brief description of the similarities between the two works, Morris says, philosophically, "I guess nothing is original."

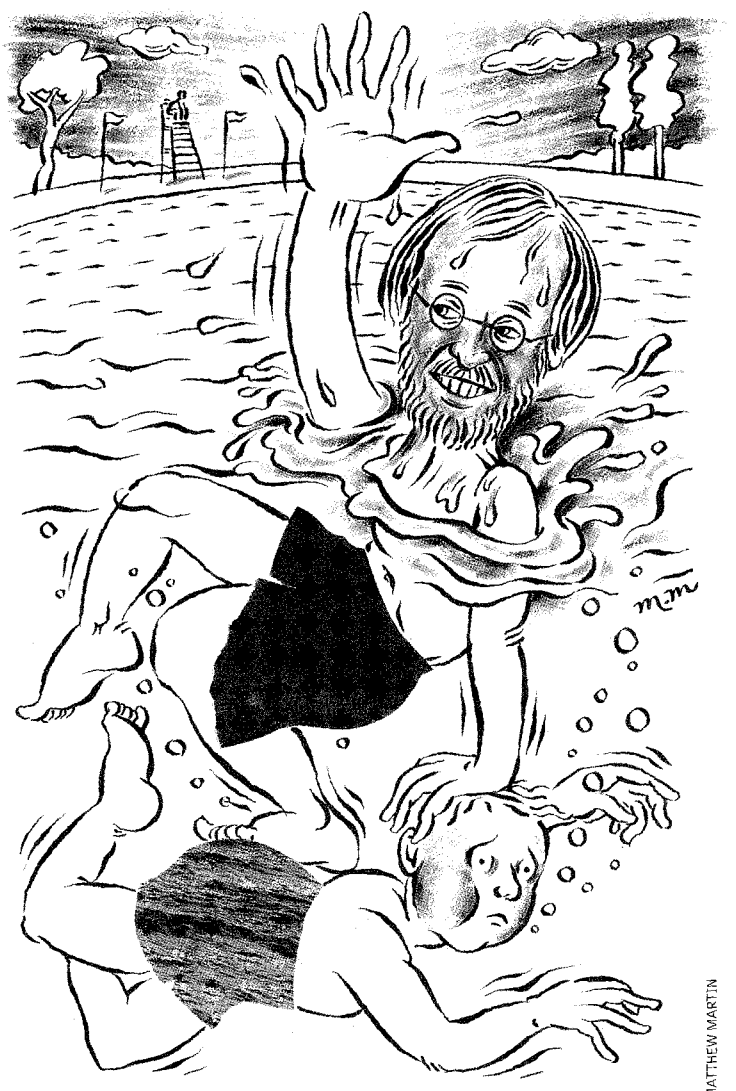
Indeed. Reagan's rescue of the 15-year-old "Edmund Morris" pervades *Dutch*. On the second page of the prologue we encounter this inscrutable sentence, part of a description of a visit Morris pays to Reagan in the Oval Office:

> That hard, splendid body, those bruising arms and knees, the prickle of wet wool are so manifest that I can feel them—as one skinny-dipper did on August 2, 1928, in the nocturnal rescue that gave "Dutch" Reagan his first newspaper headline.

After this initial tease, there are numerous hints of Morris's secret connection to Reagan sprinkled throughout the book, underscoring the importance of this narrative device. "*Ironia ironorum*," Morris archly writes, many chapters before the reader can understand the irony, "that I of all people should be charged with rescuing the old Lifeguard from the chill current of history!" While riding home from the White House "in the luxury of a limousine," Morris explains to his wife that there is one good reason for him to be Reagan's official biographer: "[A]nd that is, I've known Dutch longer than anybody realizes. He least of all!"

A cruel 680 pages after the drowning is first described, during a return visit by Morris to the Rock River in Reagan's hometown of Dixon, Illinois, we learn that the skinny-dipper the "hard, splendid body" of Reagan saved from the water that day was Morris himself:

> It was a good thing Dutch was not there, or I might have blurted what I wanted to write, my confession to him at last: that



MATTHEW MARTIN

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> the drunken youth he pulled ashore here in the dark, exactly seventy years ago, had been me.

Voll's "Dear Mr. President" is narrated by Roosevelt Haynes, a man obsessed with Ronald Reagan. During a visit by Reagan to Illinois, Haynes wants only to thank the president for rescuing him from the Rock River in 1932. On the day of Reagan's visit, Haynes is visited by an FBI agent who is alarmed by the strange letters Haynes has been sending to the White House. The agent sees a news clipping on Haynes's desk describing one of Reagan's youthful rescues. "[T]hat's the President as a lifeguard," Haynes tells him. "From an old newspaper. I've kept it since I was a boy."

In *Dutch,* Morris also describes a news clipping of a Reagan rescue he's kept since he was a teenager: "I clipped the story from the newspaper and stuck it in my scrapbook ... the earliest item of Reaganiana I possess." In both works, the reader is unaware that the narrator is the boy saved in the article until the very end of the story. Both Voll and Morris describe Reagan's heroic rescue elaborately, complete with the important metaphorical detail of Reagan literally blowing life into the two characters. Morris writes:

> [H]aving miraculously found him, grappled him, punched him out of his panic, taken him into an armlock, the Lifeguard had to *reverse* this physics of rescue, and swim back doubly encumbered, upstream whence he came, so that chaos could be brought to ground, death cheated, and Prone Pressure Resuscitation performed....

Voll's narrator describes his rescue thus:

> I am pulled underwater, I can't breathe, I start to panic. A lifeguard dives in after me. I scratch at him, fighting. I swallow water, mouthful after mouthful. The lifeguard hooks me across the chest with his arm, drags me toward shore, then carries me in his arms, I am turning blue, almost dead. He puts his lips on mine, blows air into me. I begin to cough.

In each story, this event explains the narrator's lifelong obsession with and admiration for Reagan. And while on the last page of *Dutch*, during a trip Morris takes to Reagan's hometown, Morris confesses to his secret history with Reagan and regrets never having told Reagan about it himself, on the last page of Voll's story, Haynes, during Reagan's visit near his old hometown, readies himself to thank Reagan. "What I want to tell the president is personal," Voll writes. "He saved my life." This is exactly the shocker Morris uses.

In Voll's story, the character Roosevelt Haynes is named after Theodore Roosevelt, coincidentally the subject of Morris's well-known 1979 book. Moreover, Morris eroticizes Reagan throughout *Dutch* in a manner that is oddly similar to Voll's story, in which Haynes is revealed to be a transvestite who is in love with the president. Morris's character Paul Rae, who is apparently gay, allows the book to say things about Reagan that "the narrator could hardly express himself" (according to the publisher's press release). Rae's musings to Morris are filled with sexually charged descriptions of Reagan, as are the naughty letters Haynes mails off to him.

PERHAPS IT IS not strange to find such similarities in two works about the same person, and Morris certainly sounds sincere when he says he's never read Voll's story. But Morris's literary device raises other questions, too. In the footnotes to *Dutch*, Morris attributes the story of Reagan's rescuing a man named James Raider to page 31 of Garry Wills's *Reagan's America*, which appeared in 1987. Wills describes Reagan's career as a lifeguard over six summers, from 1927 to 1932, noting that the future president saved 77 lives during that period. In a note at the end of *Story* magazine, Voll also cites this passage as the basis for his short story and remarks that, for the purposes of his fiction, Haynes was Reagan's seventy-seventh save. It is strange, then, to read a press release from Morris's publisher that lists among *Dutch*'s "biographical revelations" the fact that "RR saved seventy-seven lives as a youthful lifeguard."

Of course, a writer can't always be responsible for how his book is marketed. But there are more serious problems with Morris's account of the near-drowning. His rendering of the time his fictional counterpart was saved by Reagan is based on an article from the Dixon *Evening Telegraph* of August 3, 1928, an article also described in Wills's book. The article itself (which I have consulted, courtesy of the Lee County Historical Society in Dixon) describes Reagan making his twenty-fifth save as he pulls Raider from the river. In Wills's account, the article is quoted and responsibly described. In Morris's hands, however, this historical document becomes the raw material for a bizarre alchemy of fact and fiction.

First, there is his slightly inaccurate description of the article itself. He writes of an "eighteen-point banner headline: PULLED FROM THE JAWS OF DEATH." The actual article has no banner headline at all, but a one-column headline like the ones on several other front-page articles in the paper that day. It reads: "JAMES RAIDER PULLED FROM JAWS OF DEATH." These discrepancies are obviously trivial, except according to the standard of accuracy that Morris has set for himself. "God knows," he has written, "I lock my study door and drop all the blinds before deleting so much as a dot from a four-dot ellipsis in somebody's quoted remarks."

And Morris did not leave Reagan's rescue of Raider there. Morris describes his imaginary characters as "projectors" through which the reader can see the real life of Reagan. This analogy suggests detachment and objectivity, and Morris insists that the device does not impair a properly historical attitude. But at the end of *Dutch* we are told that there was no James Raider! "How smart of the boy," Morris writes of his fake youthful self, "to identify himself as the hero of *Jim Raider, Rocketeer!*" Who is "Jim Raider, Rocketeer"? He is the title character in a novel by "Edmund Morris."

Think about it. Morris took a historical person—James Raider—and turned him into a fictional character who appears in the fiction of a fictionalized version of Morris. He then replaced the real Raider with the fictional Morris. What is this if not a deliberate historical distortion? James Raider, after all, was real. He went swimming with three others at about 9:30 p.m. on August 2, 1928. At the time of his rescue, he lived at 625 Douglas Avenue in Dixon, Illinois. A "Publisher's Note" in *Dutch* assures readers that "All the words

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(written or spoken) of Ronald Reagan, all his recounted thoughts and acts, and indeed those of every historical character in the text, are matters of fact and of record." James Raider seems to be a notable exception.

Morris says he tried to track down the real James Raider but was told that no records of him exist in Dixon. Of course, a person's obscurity is no excuse for a historian's inaccuracy. Asked about the fate of James Raider in his book, Morris changed the subject, suggesting that the question of verisimilitude is beside the point—that his metaphor about Reagan rescuing America is what matters.

Perhaps reviewers should not have been so surprised at what Morris produced. This is not the first piece of writing in which Morris hangs out with famous people he is too young to know personally. In an article for *The New York Times* in 1975, Morris takes a tour of Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park with none other than Theodore Roosevelt. "I was not surprised," Morris wrote, "on a recent solitary hike through [the park], to see a flash of teeth and spectacles and hear the high-pitched croak of Old Four Eyes himself. 'This,' said T.R., waving a translucent buckskin sleeve, 'is where the romance of my life began.'" The two old friends wander around together, while Morris impresses Roosevelt with readings from the president's autobiography.

In 1991, in *The Washington Post*, Morris defended Janet Malcolm, the writer who was sued for libel by Jeffrey H. Masson in part because she allegedly altered quotations. "Scholarly biographers are not ordinarily supposed to be parties to such tinkering with the truth," Morris wrote. This was written when Morris was wrestling with how to write about Reagan. But then he proceeded to ask an apparently paradoxical question: "To what extent may a writer honestly distort in order to make the truth more clear?" In *Dutch—ironia ironorum*—he has given his answer. ■

Payback time for Jesse Helms.

Undiplomatic

By MICHELLE COTTLE

NORTH CAROLINA SENATOR Jesse Helms has never been what you'd call close pals with Carol Moseley-Braun, who in 1992 became the first black woman ever elected to the United States Senate. There was, for example, that time the two legislators found themselves elbow-to-elbow in a Senate elevator. As Moseley-Braun tells it, the gentleman from North Carolina began singing "Dixie," vowing to keep it up until he made her cry. Moseley-Braun fired back: "Senator Helms, your singing would make me cry if you sang 'Rock of Ages.'" This exchange transpired, not coincidentally, after an ugly floor-battle in which Moseley-Braun single-handedly thwarted Helms's efforts to have the Senate renew a design patent on an emblem for the United Daughters of the Confederacy that included the Confederate flag. Moseley-Braun had objected to the government's sanctioning a symbol of the Old South and, in what is considered the high point of her tenure, delivered an impassioned speech about slavery and human dignity that helped her amass enough votes to defeat Helms. Helms never forgave her.

So it is odd to discover that Helms has suddenly, if quite unintentionally, become his former nemesis's biggest ally in politics. When, in mid-October, President Clinton officially appointed Moseley-Braun to serve as U.S. ambassador to New Zealand, Helms promptly vowed to bottle up her nomination in the Foreign Relations Committee, which he runs as if it were his own private fiefdom. Helms told the Capitol Hill newspaper *Roll Call* that Moseley-Braun "should look for another line of work." If she wants the committee even to consider her nomination, Helms elaborated, "at the very minimum she has got to apologize for the display that she provoked over a little symbol for a wonderful group of little old ladies."

NORMALLY, SUCH OPPOSITION from Helms would be the kiss of death for a diplomatic appointee—as it was when Clinton tapped Republican William Weld to be ambassador to Mexico, only to have Helms quash the nomination because of Weld's tolerance for legalizing marijuana for medicinal use. But Helms's pique has turned the Moseley-Braun nomination into a fight over race and partisan pettiness, with all the predictable suspects emerging to say all the predictable things. "I think the pattern is very clear to me and clear to anybody ... blacks need not apply," Representative James Clyburn, chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, told *Roll Call*, referring to both the Moseley-Braun hullabaloo and Senate Republicans' recent (and weakly explained) rejection of African American judicial nominee Ronnie White. In this case, however, a race war is just what Moseley-Braun needs: without it, attention might turn to her history of ethics problems and her general behavior as a public official—both of which ought to disqualify her even from a less-than-exalted diplomatic posting.

Truth be told, if Helms hadn't made such an ass of himself, someone might have already started asking tough questions about those pesky charges of financial misconduct that have been swirling around Moseley-Braun since her 1992 Senate run. Chief among these is the allegation that the candidate and her campaign-manager-turned-fiancé, Kgosie Matthews, appropriated some $281,000 in campaign funds for personal use: Armani suits, Tiffany jewelry, romantic getaways, stereo equipment, and two Jeep Cherokees. During the campaign, the couple's high-flying lifestyle attracted the attention both of staffers (some of whom left in disgust) and the media. In 1994, the IRS took a look at the campaign's books and was sufficiently disturbed by what it found that, after a 15-month investigation, it twice asked the Justice Department to impanel a grand jury to conduct a more in-depth probe.

The Justice Department denied both requests for lack of "credible information," a finding that Moseley-Braun has

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cited as proof of her innocence. Justice officials claimed that such refusals are common. Outside experts on tax law, however, disagreed—prompting speculation that perhaps Moseley-Braun received preferential treatment. John Bray, a former criminal-tax-division official, told *Roll Call* that such a refusal was "virtually unheard-of." A former IRS investigator told WBBM-TV in Chicago that, in three decades of experience, he had never heard of the department's refusing such a request. (Adding another wrinkle to the story, the decision not to investigate was made by Assistant Attorney General Loretta Argrett, over whose confirmation Moseley-Braun had presided in 1993 as a member of the Judiciary Committee.)

Moseley-Braun's campaign also prompted an investigation by the Federal Election Commission. The FEC never levied any fines—another fact Moseley-Braun is happy to point out. But, as *Roll Call* reported when the FEC closed its investigation in 1997, the auditors didn't exactly come away convinced of the senator's innocence. For instance, Moseley-Braun claimed that a post-election jaunt she and Matthews took to Hawaii was for fund-raising purposes. FEC auditors thought it looked suspiciously like a pleasure trip. The result: "[I]n negotiations with Moseley-Braun's lawyers, the FEC agreed to split the difference, counting half as campaign-related and half as personal." Auditors also looked into tens of thousands of campaign dollars Matthews spent on personal items, but they ultimately took the campaign's word—without corroborating receipts or paperwork—that Matthews was owed that money for out-of-pocket expenses he'd incurred on the campaign's behalf. The FEC finally abandoned the issue, not because it had cleared the campaign of financial shenanigans, but because the statute of limitations was fast running out.

ETHICAL MATTERS ASIDE, one might also question whether Moseley-Braun has the judgment to be an ambassador. This is, after all, the senator who fraternized on a semi-regular basis with General Sani Abacha, the now-deceased head of Nigeria's bloody, repressive military regime. Although the United States had condemned the despot and broken off relations with Abacha's government, Moseley-Braun made at least seven trips to Nigeria—often accompanied by Matthews, who was a registered lobbyist for the Nigerian government. In Senate hearings during the spring of 1996, Moseley-Braun opposed sanctions against Nigeria, arguing that the United States was applying a harsher standard to the African nation than it was to China or Latin America. That August, without the knowledge of either the Clinton administration or her staff, Moseley-Braun paid yet another call to Abacha, prompting criticism from the State Department, prominent Democrats, and black leaders across the country, including Representative Jesse Jackson Jr., TransAfrica President Randall Robinson, and Chicago Mayor Richard Daley. Moseley-Braun's chief of staff resigned in protest. For her part, the senator argued that it was no one's business where she spent her summer vacation.

Finally, there's Moseley-Braun's flair for diplomacy in interpersonal relations. In September of last year, when conservative columnist George Will took a poke at the senator's ethics problems, Moseley-Braun responded by suggesting that Will don a bedsheet and join up with his philosophical brethren in the Klan. "I think because he couldn't say 'nigger' he said 'corrupt,'" she publicly charged—necessitating an apology to Will later that day.

In post-O.J. America, there is something particularly offensive about a well-to-do public figure brandishing the race card when accused of wrongdoing. Sadly, the Moseley-Braun nomination battle has reduced Democrats—along with left-leaning groups such as People for the American Way—to just that. Responding in righteous indignation to Helms's roadblock, Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle charged: "The array of anti-minority sentiment expressed almost each week now by Republicans is historic." Vice President Al Gore, proclaiming himself "angry and upset," has called on black churches and civil rights groups to raise the pressure for a swift vote on Moseley-Braun's nomination.

Helms—realizing his tactical error—has tried to shift the focus of attention. The senator has agreed to schedule confirmation hearings on Moseley-Braun, provided that the White House release confidential documents concerning the nominee's finances. "This nomination comes to the Senate with an ethical cloud hanging over Ms. Moseley-Braun," he recently noted. "Indeed, I wonder if the president and his associates even examined her record before submitting it to the Senate."

Of course, one could wonder if perhaps this isn't how the White House planned things all along. After all, the animosity between Helms and Moseley-Braun was hardly a secret when the administration made the appointment. It's possible Clinton strategists saw this as a win-win situation: If the Senate waved her through, great. Alternatively, if Helms blocked her, Democrats could brand the whole GOP a bunch of white supremacists. Of course, it takes a pretty cynical mind to ascribe such motives to the White House. Then again, it takes a pretty cynical mind to nominate someone with Moseley-Braun's history in the first place. ■

Campaign Journal

Cashing Out

By DANA MILBANK

FOR HALLOWEEN THIS year, I want to dress up as something *really* scary. That is why I'll be going as Senator Mitch McConnell, and my wife will be outfitted as the Kentucky Republican's omnipresent sidekick, Soft Money. She'll be in a green foam-rubber ensemble; I'll wear the usual McConnell accessories—horns, pitchfork, tail, cash-stuffed pockets.

McConnell, who last week killed yet another effort by a majority of senators to clean up campaign finance, relishes his role as friend of fat cats and tormenter of clean-government types. McConnell hopes free-flowing funds will help Republicans. But he ought to consider the latest victims of big-money campaign funding. The cash craze drove

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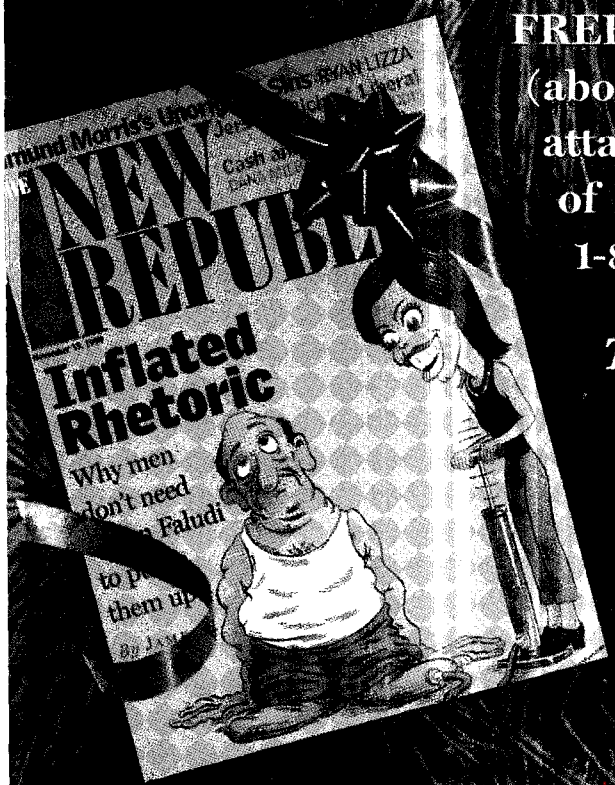

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Elizabeth Dole out of the race last week and gave Pat Buchanan an excuse to leave the Republican Party altogether. It caused presidential candidate Gary Bauer, lion of the Christian right, to side with finance reformer John McCain, McConnell's nemesis. And now, ironically, it seems that McConnell's candidate, George W. Bush, has fund-raised so many challengers into oblivion that he's allowed McCain, the man left standing, to mount a serious challenge.

Falls Church, Virginia, October 25

We begin this tale of woe with poor Pat Buchanan, a man not usually worthy of sympathy. But even xenophobes can be pitiable. First, big money contributed to his decision to bolt the GOP. Then, just as Buchanan was to announce his Reform Party candidacy, big money, in the form of Donald Trump, again trumped him. Trump declared that he, too, was quitting the Republican Party in anticipation of a Reform Party bid. Finally, today, Buchanan's low-budget Reform Party kickoff event turns into a disaster.

Outside the Doubletree Hotel, protesters greet Buchanan with a sign announcing TO ADOLF WITH LOVE. Inside, moments into Buchanan's announcement speech, the sound flickers and fails, eliciting from the Buchananites cries of "Sabotage!" and crude insults directed at the sound system: "Made in China!" and "Union microphone!" The sound, once repaired, breaks again midway through the speech, leaving Buchanan to fiddle with it for what seems like forever until his sister, Bay, finally fetches a technician. The disaster-prone Buchanan, it seems, will fit in just fine in the Reform Party.

Maybe Buchanan couldn't raise much money because he has wacky ideas and marginal support. But, cleverly, he sounds a populist theme in his Doubletree speech. "The day of the outsider is over in the Beltway parties; the money men have seen to that," he bellows. "Let me say to the money boys and the Beltway elites who think that, at long last, they have pulled up the drawbridge and locked us out forever: You don't know this peasant army." If Buchanan gets the Reform nomination, of course, this particular peasant army will have $13 million in public campaign funds to play with.

Washington, D.C., October 20

Five days before Buchanan bolts, Dole calls her own meeting in a hotel, this one the tony St. Regis, to announce that she is quitting the race. Instead of a peasant revolt, this is more of an upscale wake. "What did you do for Mrs. Dole?" a reporter asks a staffer, in hushed tones. "I did direct mail," replies the grieving employee. Yes, we know that Dole had been suffering terribly, and that she's probably better off where she is now, but does she have to go so soon? I had even marked November 7 in my calendar as the start date of her presidential kickoff tour—a plan that would have had Dole announcing her candidacy at exactly the moment that her failure seemed assured.

The funereal mood disappears instantly when the candidate appears with her husband, the cutup who voiced doubts about his wife and support for her rival McCain. Now, at his wife's pullout, Bob Dole steals the show again, winking at a friend and offering a wry remark off-microphone. He grins at inappropriate times, a ham for the cameras.

But no amount of Bob's clowning can obscure the central reason for Liddy's failure. "The bottom line remains money," she says. Like Buchanan, if she'd had a better message (or, really, any message at all), she might have won more support and therefore more dollars. But, in pulling out of the race, she argues that she would have done 108 fund-raisers this year, and, even then, Bush and Steve Forbes "would enjoy a seventy-five- or eighty-to-one cash advantage," she says. "Perhaps I could handle two-to-one or ten-to-one, but not eighty-to-one." Though beaten by the lack of spending limits on Bush and Forbes, Dole used her farewell speech to join McCain's call for an end to soft money.

Derry, New Hampshire, October 21

The only Republican candidates not affected by Bush's decision to break the spending limits are the irrelevancies—Bauer, Orrin Hatch, and Alan Keyes. The losers get their moment in the spotlight tonight, before the cameras of New Hampshire's WNDS-TV and all 6,600 of its viewing households. The major candidates are skipping the debate, and their lack of response necessitates the use of substitutes, including a Reform Party official and 1996 vanity candidate Morry Taylor, who prepares by drinking a beer in the back of the studio.

The debate, full of miscues, looks more *Wayne's World* than presidential forum. Even Hatch cancels, leaving the diminutive Bauer to battle the demonstrative Keyes on such key questions as "How would you persuade a Buddhist or a Muslim that they are part of your America?" Taylor, known as "the Grizz" and wearing a grizzly-bear tie, goes on next. Mercifully, the debate ends after an hour—and is followed promptly by a Forbes ad.

"They're all fringe characters here," says the Grizz, who should know. But Taylor, whose long gray hair makes him look like Buffalo Bill, says he will not shake up the race by running again. "I spent my money, had my say," he says. Spend money, have say: The two are now one and the same. Even Bauer has joined the criticism of the money system. When McCain asked other candidates to support a ban of soft money, Bauer obliged with a letter on October 19. "Those unlimited special interest funds distort the legislative process and they have been egregiously abused," he wrote.

Newport, New Hampshire, October 22

Bush, with his prodigious fund-raising, has inadvertently shrunk the primary field to Forbes and McCain; he has repeated the mistake Al Gore made in driving out all challengers but Bill Bradley. Bush's money chase has knocked out Dole, Buchanan, Dan Quayle, Lamar Alexander, John Kasich, and Bob Smith—which has helped McCain climb in the New Hampshire polls to 27 percent (from ten percent this summer) against Bush's 39 percent. But the Texas governor's vulnerability appears to be growing. A recent *Newsweek* poll found Bush up only nine points over Gore and five over Bradley. Of course, this is nothing a few million dollars of Bush advertising won't fix. But, because Bush's candidacy is based on inevitability, he'll be in trouble if these numbers persist.

Bush's opponents, meanwhile, are getting smarter. Forbes, running second to Bush in Iowa, is essentially in cahoots with McCain, who is strong in New Hampshire. Buchanan, mean-

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while, is shrewdly playing down abortion to curry favor with his new Reform constituency. Gore, for his part, is readying an arsenal of barbs for Bush on health care, the environment, and problems in the Texas border region; he is even planning a big campaign finance reform push for next spring.

Until now, Bush has responded to the threat with a parade of endorsements—Gore's losing strategy against Bradley. His first ads will help. But Bush's play-it-safe style is wearing thin. He still uses his five-month-old stump routine, urging that the American dream "touch every willing heart" and then shaking every willing hand. Only the rare flourish takes him from his script, and the ad libs usually aren't an improvement.

Bush delivers a special message in Newport and at his next stop, in Keene, "for those of you supporting one of my erstwhile opponents, and I emphasize 'erstwhile': Don't work too hard." Perhaps he should stop emphasizing "erstwhile" until he looks the word up. Moments later, he promises "an administration of decent and honorable people trying to do what's right for Texas—America." Finally, asked about vice presidential candidates, he declares, "It is incredibly presumptive for somebody who has not yet earned his party's nomination to start speculating about vice presidents." Now, Governor, you are the *presumptive* nominee, so it wouldn't be all that *presumptuous*.

But malapropisms are not the message. Money is the message. Asked in Newport whether campaign finance will become a big issue in the 2000 race, Bush lists a few token reforms he supports and acknowledges, "I think it's an issue." But, compared to his top priorities, he adds, "I don't think it's as big an issue." Apparently not. When McCain asked for a letter of support for his reform legislation from the other candidates, a Bush spokesman said that all the governor would be sending McCain was a BUSH FOR PRESIDENT bumper sticker. ■

Good riddance, McCain-Feingold.

Well Off

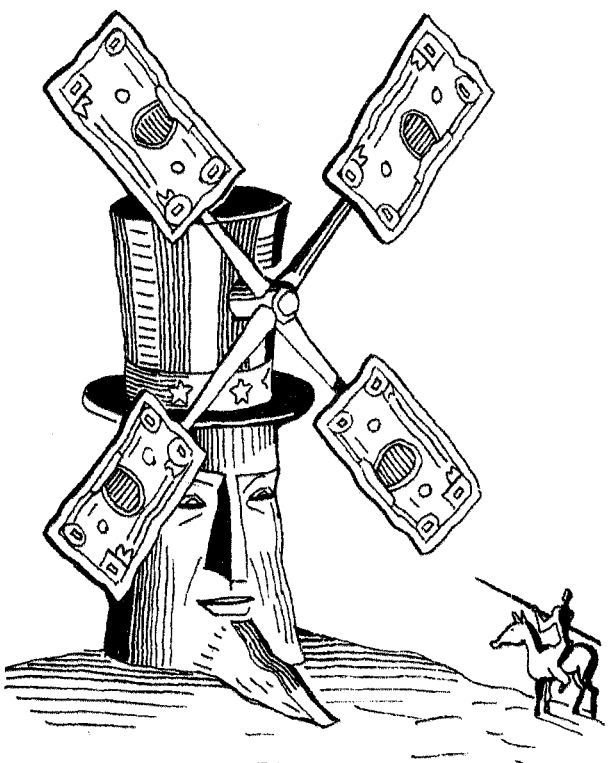
By JOHN MUELLER

ONCE UPON A time, carping about campaign finance abuse was mainly the province of Democrats. Nowadays, however, at least some of the most prominent proponents of campaign finance reform are Republicans: people such as John McCain, who cosponsored the campaign finance reform bill that died yet another death in the Senate last week, and Elizabeth Dole, who cited her inability to raise enough money to compete with George W. Bush and Steve Forbes as a primary reason for her withdrawal from the presidential race. To the extent that intelligent commentators question campaign finance reform—as the dean of Stanford Law School, Kathleen M. Sullivan, did on the op-ed page of *The New York Times* last Sunday—they usually do so because they worry that particular reforms might either backfire or violate the First Amendment.

But it is the defenders of money in politics, the ones so widely reviled in the elite press, who speak the truth about campaign finance reform. In a democratic system of government, there will always be some inequality of influence. Yet that is not necessarily a flaw, and it is rarely as debilitating to good government as reformers would have you believe. When you dig beneath the rhetoric of campaign finance reform, you discover that the "reforms" being proposed would, in practice, constitute anything but an improvement.

The essential complaint of reformers is that the present system gives too much influence to so-called special interest groups. This is also the most popular complaint. Who, after all, supports special interests? Actually, we all should. Democracy is distinguished from autocracy not as much by the freedom of individual speech—many authoritarian governments effectively allow individuals to petition for redress of grievances and to complain to one another, which is sometimes called "freedom of conversation"—as by the fact that democracies allow people to organize in order to pursue their political interests. So the undisciplined, chaotic, and essentially unequal interplay of special interest groups that reformers decry is not a perversion of democracy—it's the whole point of it.

Nor is campaign finance reform likely to subdue special interests. People and groups who seek to influence public policy do so not for their own enjoyment but because they really care about certain issues and programs. If reformers



DAVID SUTER

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somehow manage to reduce the impact of such groups in election campaigns, these groups are very likely to find other ways to seek favor and redress, no matter how clever the laws that seek to inconvenience them are. For example, if Congress prohibited soft money donations to political parties—which is what the ill-fated McCain-Feingold bill promised to do—special interests would merely spend more money on their own advertising and get-out-the-vote efforts, which are known in the political business as "independent expenditures." As Senator Robert Bennett of Utah put it, rich people "will always have influence in politics." The solution, he said, is not, or should not be, to create barriers that impel them to "spend even more money to hire lawyers and consultants to find ways around the law to get the same results."

Lurking behind the complaint about special interest groups is a concern about political inequality—a concern that sounds quite reasonable, since, in a democracy, nobody should be denied political opportunity merely because of his or her social or economic class, or because he or she does not adhere to the visions or dictates of a particular ideological group. But that is not the same thing as saying that people must necessarily be equal in their *impact* on the political system. Democracy is fundamentally a system in which people are (equally) free to become politically unequal. They are allowed to try to increase their political importance by working in politics or by supplying money to appropriate places. Democracy is therefore characterized not by political equality, active participation by the citizenry, or something resembling majority rule and consensus, but by varying degrees of political inequality and by substantial apathy—that is, by minority rule and majority acquiescence.

Some people, because of their manipulative skills, social position, or sheer luck, will do better than others. Unlike other systems, however, democracy gives everyone—without regard to status or ideology—the opportunity to seek to manipulate the system in their favor. Effectively, this means that democracies are often quite sensitive to small groups that organize to seek influence over policy, whether they represent racial minorities, gay rights advocates, beekeepers, yacht owners, or disabled veterans. Democracies are thus responsive and attentive to the interests of the citizenry—at least when compared to other forms of government—but they are nowhere near equally responsive to the interests of each citizen all the time, and they cannot be made so by means of legislation.

Many reformers are primarily concerned about a particular influential minority: the business community. But if a business leader's advantage in access to a time-pressured politician is somehow reprehensible and must be reformed, what about other inequalities—that is, why focus only on economic ones? A telephone call from a big-time political columnist such as David Broder of *The Washington Post* is likely to get a politician's attention even faster than a call from an important CEO. Should the influential Broder hold off on his next column until the rest of us deserving unknowns have had a chance to add our two cents in the same forum? And, while Broder's experience over the years as a political journalist arguably gives him some added credibility on questions of how we should run our country, so, surely, does that of a CEO who has successfully managed a large corporation and has amassed enough wealth to attract the attention of politicians. Inequalities such as these are simply and unavoidably endemic to the whole political system, as they are to life itself. It may be possible to reduce this inequality a bit, but it is difficult to imagine a reform that could raise the political impact of the average factory worker—or even of the average business executive—to anywhere near the level of influence enjoyed by a David Broder. One can even argue that, because it allows the rich (along with other minorities) to organize to protect their interests, democracy has been able to survive a potential defect that theoreticians from Plato onward have considered terminal: democracy has been able to co-opt, rather than alienate, the rich.

What makes the philosophy of campaign finance reform so ironic is that the laws have such a poor track record of rooting out the alleged abuses they are intended to eliminate. In fact, many of the ills reformers now seek to address are the by-products of earlier attempts to clean up the system. By capping individual contributions to candidates at the ludicrously low level of $1,000 (which has never been adjusted for inflation), for example, the Watergate-era reforms diverted political funds into soft money (donations made directly to political parties, which the parties then spend to influence elections) or into direct-issue advertising—which happen to be the two primary targets of most current reforms. The reforms have also enhanced the comparative advantage of billionaires, such as Ross Perot and Steve Forbes, who can finance their campaigns out of their own pockets, or famous sons, such as George W. Bush, who inherit vast fund-raising networks.

Reformers of all stripes argue that political campaigns cost too much. But the real question is, compared with what? The entire cost of the 1996 elections was about 25 percent of what Procter & Gamble routinely spends each year to market its products. In what sense is this amount too much? Some people do weary of the constant barrage of advertising at election time, but democracy leaves them entirely free to flip to another channel, the same method used so effectively by anyone who would rather not learn about the purported virtues of Crest toothpaste.

There is also the related gripe that the ever-increasing need for donations means that politicians spend too much of their time raising money. But much of this problem arises from the absurdly low limit the reformers have placed on direct campaign contributions. If anything, rather than restricting soft money (as the McCain-Feingold bill would have), it's time to raise or eliminate altogether the $1,000 limit on individual contributions to candidates. Politicians seem to find it politically incorrect to advocate this sensible change, even though it would probably reduce the amount of time they spend campaigning for campaign funds. Getting rid of special interest influence by other means—say, by regulating independent groups' expenditures—would only work if reformers successfully dispensed with the right to free speech. Since the advocacy of special interests is the very stuff of the democratic process, the unintended goal of the campaign reformers ultimately seems to be the repeal of democracy itself. ■

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Haley Barbour's "mere puff."

Prize Fight

By JOHN SOLOMON

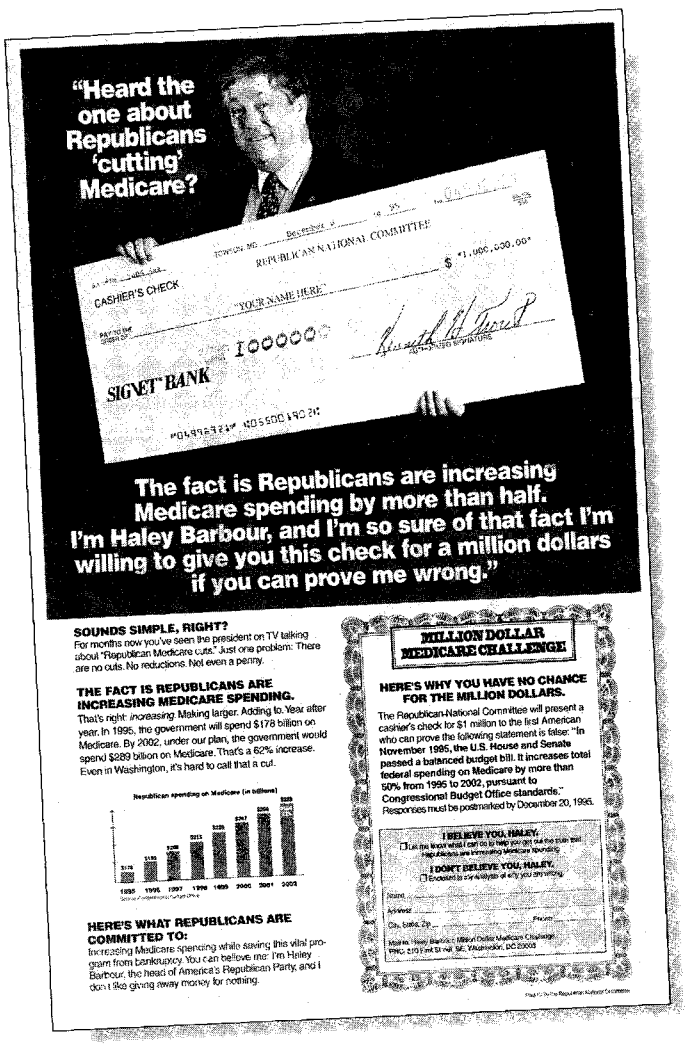
IN DECEMBER 1995, members of the Republican National Committee's brain trust, fearing that the Clinton administration was pummeling them in the public relations war over Medicare reform, hit upon what must have seemed at the time to be a brilliant counterpunch. In a full-page advertisement that ran in both *USA Today* and *Roll Call*, readers were treated to the smiling visage of RNC Chairman Haley Barbour holding an oversized $1 million check, Ed McMahon-style. "Heard the one about Republicans 'cutting' Medicare?" the ad read. "The fact is Republicans are increasing Medicare spending by more than half.... I'm so sure of that fact I'm willing to give you this check for a million dollars if you can prove me wrong." A clip-and-mail box below laid out the full terms of the RNC's "Million Dollar Medicare Challenge": "The Republican National Committee will present a cashier's check for $1 million to the first American who can prove the following statement is false: 'In November 1995, the U.S. House and Senate passed a balanced budget bill. It increases total federal spending on Medicare by more than 50% from 1995 to 2002, pursuant to Congressional Budget Office standards.'"

Almost immediately, the RNC's offices were deluged with letters from citizens across the nation hoping to hit pay dirt. Douglas Frymire, a 70-year-old from Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, wrote to point out that, since Congress cannot guarantee budget numbers for more than one year, the statement's claims about years after 1996 were demonstrably false. Leslie Kee, a 42-year old high school teacher from Lusk, Wyoming (population 1,500), argued that, when you compared the Republican plan with what would already have been allocated to Medicare under existing law, the GOP proposal would actually *reduce* spending. Charles Resor, an inventor in Jackson, Wyoming, was more concerned with principles of grammar; he noted that, since a bill does not actually increase anything until it becomes a law, the statement would have been correct only "if it had used the words 'would have increased' instead of 'increases.'" Representative Gene Taylor, a Democrat from Mississippi—who personally walked his letter over to Barbour's office—added a semantic argument, pointing out that the "balanced budget bill" the ad referred to did not actually balance the budget that year.

In all, some 80 respondents from 32 states sent in entries ranging from handwritten paragraphs to multipage analyses complete with charts and footnotes. And today, nearly four years after Barbour launched the ad, the RNC finds itself enmeshed in a complicated legal battle with 18 respondents who are still trying to collect the million-dollar reward.

The RNC contends that it never meant for the ad to be taken literally, and, indeed, after logging in the addresses of the 80 contestants, it threw out most of their entries. But things began to turn serious in June 1996, when one of the entrants, Bob Shireman, an analyst at the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, filed a breach-of-contract suit against Barbour and the RNC in Washington, D.C., Superior Court.

When Judge Russell F. Canan refused to throw the case out, the RNC got sufficiently spooked to attempt some legal maneuverings of its own. In January 1997, as part of an effort both to cap its liability and to move the trial from Washington to the presumably more sympathetic jurisdiction of Jackson, Mississippi (where Barbour's brother happens to be a federal judge), the RNC filed a countersuit in Jackson against all 80 entrants. As President Clinton was being inaugurated for his second term—won at least in part thanks to his success in portraying the GOP as a gang of ruthless Medicare cutters—the 80 respondents to the RNC's Medicare Challenge, some of whom had forgotten they had even entered the contest, were being served with a 28-page summons demanding that they forfeit their


"Heard the one about Republicans 'cutting' Medicare?
REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE
CASHIER'S CHECK
"YOUR NAME HERE"
SIGVET BANK
The fact is Republicans are increasing Medicare spending by more than half. I'm Haley Barbour, and I'm so sure of that fact I'm willing to give you this check for a million dollars if you can prove me wrong."
SOUNDS SIMPLE, RIGHT?
For months now you've seen the president on TV talking about "Republican Medicare cuts." Just one problem: There are no cuts. No reductions. Not even a penny.
THE FACT IS REPUBLICANS ARE INCREASING MEDICARE SPENDING.
That's right: increasing. Making larger. Adding to. Year after year. In 1995, the government will spend $178 billion on Medicare. By 2002, under our plan, the government would spend $289 billion on Medicare. That's a 62% increase. Even in Washington, it's hard to call that a cut.
HERE'S WHAT REPUBLICANS ARE COMMITTED TO:
Increasing Medicare spending while saving this vital program from bankruptcy. You can believe me: I'm Haley Barbour, the head of America's Republican Party, and I don't like giving away money for nothing.
MILLION DOLLAR MEDICARE CHALLENGE
HERE'S WHY YOU HAVE NO CHANCE FOR THE MILLION DOLLARS.
The Republican National Committee will present a cashier's check for $1 million to the first American who can prove the following statement is false: "In November 1995, the U.S. House and Senate passed a balanced budget bill. It increases total federal spending on Medicare by more than 50% from 1995 to 2002, pursuant to Congressional Budget Office standards."
Responses must be postmarked by December 20, 1996.
I BELIEVE YOU, HALEY.
I DON'T BELIEVE YOU, HALEY.

JOHN SOLOMON is a writer based in New York City.

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claims to the $1 million or risk being held liable for the RNC's legal fees.

Most chose to drop out of the competition, though not without some grumbling about being targeted in a lawsuit simply for following the RNC's own instructions. "We still have free speech in this country. I believe that is what I fought for in three wars," John Osborne of North Palm Beach, Florida, wrote in a letter to the RNC. "Doesn't Haley Barbour have anything better to do than bring stress to a 75-year-old man with a heart condition?"

At a prison farm in Louisiana, another of the defendants, who was serving a sentence for robbery, mistook the lawsuit notice for an announcement that he had won the challenge. He even penned a letter to the RNC's Mississippi law firm thanking them for "the opportunity of a lifetime." Upon learning the true nature of the RNC's threat, he decided to stay in the game. Seventeen other entrants agreed, the RNC's lawsuit having merely stiffened their resolve. "Why should I drop this after all the work I did?" asked 83-year-old Bettie A. Caroline of Dayton, Ohio. "I worked like such a beaver." They've put in more than effort since then—many have hired lawyers. Roland Reed, an attorney with the U.S. Social Security Administration in Nashville, Tennessee, and one of the 18 defendants, estimates that he's racked up about $90,000 worth of expenses in time and travel related to his case.

YET, FOR ALL their determination, the 18 defendants face an uphill battle. For one thing, they're a motley crew, and each of them is ultimately vying for a prize that only one of them can win. At the first pretrial meeting of the parties this May, everyone seemed to have his or her own schedule in mind, and there was considerable eye-rolling among the more knowledgeable defendants when their less sophisticated codefendants piped up with basic legal questions. It was, said the RNC's lead attorney, Thomas K. Kirby, "one of the more extraordinary conversations" he had ever been involved in.

Since then, even some of the lawyers representing the defendants have had a hard time keeping up with the case. "Someone files a motion and all these responses come from all over the country," says one. "Half the filings you don't receive, half of them you can't understand." It's been so confusing that one defendant, Ray Lunder of Madison, Wisconsin, has been unsuccessfully trying to drop out of the case for months and has still not received any acknowledgment. Bob Shireman, the man who started the legal battle to begin with, was more successful in coming to a settlement. In return for Shireman's dropping his claim, the RNC agreed to pay his legal costs.

As for the rest of the group, if they manage to overcome their logistical difficulties, they face mixed legal precedents. The RNC has asked the judge to grant summary judgment, arguing that no reasonable person could have construed the ad as a bona fide offer. In August, U.S. District Judge Kimba Wood ruled in favor of Pepsi-Cola Company in a similar case stemming from a commercial that humorously implied that anyone who collected seven million "Pepsi Stuff" points could trade them in for a Marine Harrier jet. A Seattle man collected the requisite points, but Pepsi refused to give him the plane, contending that the offer was never serious. Wood ruled that the offer was not made explicitly and, considering the plane's $23 million price tag, "no objective person could reasonably have concluded that the commercial actually offered consumers a Harrier Jet."

In her decision, however, Wood indicated that the ruling might have been different had the offer been more direct and reasonable. She cited *Carlill* v. *Carbolic Smoke Ball Co.*, an 1892 case in which a British court ruled that the company was liable for an offer in a newspaper ad promising £100 to anyone who contracted influenza after using its product—a bizarre kind of smokable patent medicine. (The company, much like Barbour and the RNC, had contended that its offer was a "mere puff.") Wood also cited *Lefkowitz* v. *Great Minneapolis Surplus Store*, an appellate case in which the state Supreme Court ruled against a store that refused to honor an offer when a man named Morris Lefkowitz tried to cash in on it. The newspaper ad read: "Saturday 9am Sharp, 3 Brand New Fur Coats, Worth to $100.00; First Come First Served $1 Each." The court ruled that since the advertisement was specific and Lefkowitz fulfilled all the terms, a contract had been formed. Lefkowitz got his $1 coat.

IT MAY BE concern over the interpretation of the word "offer" that explains why the RNC's own description of the Medicare Challenge has evolved over the past several years. In a rejection letter sent to all entrants, Barbour thanked recipients for responding to "an historic million-dollar offer." Then, in legal filings in January 1997, the RNC called the Medicare Challenge a "political announcement." Now, the RNC contends the ad was a "parody," not "a bona fide offer." Under basic legal doctrine, ambiguity tends to be the responsibility of the party making the offer. If the RNC had only added a short disclaimer, the case would probably not exist.

If the court rules that the RNC's ad might have constituted a valid offer, a trial will ensue, and the Republicans may end up having to show that none of the entrants successfully disproved the ad's statement. Indeed, the RNC has already made arguments to that effect. So far, the organization's main strategy has been to point to a 1995 report by the Congressional Budget Office indicating that, under the Republican plan, Medicare spending would have increased in absolute terms by 62 percent. However, to fend off some of the semantic objections to the ad's contention, the RNC has had to resort to more tortuous explanations. For example, in response to Taylor's argument that the "balanced budget bill" referred to in the ad didn't actually balance the budget, the RNC has countered that congressional legislation is commonly identified by its subject matter and "need not fully achieve its goal." Similarly, in answer to Resor's contention that a bill cannot "increase" anything until it is passed into law, the RNC has carefully parsed the tenses used in its ad, explaining that "Congress commonly uses the present tense to describe the effects of a bill." The RNC, in short, is now in the curious position of defending itself through legal and linguistic hairsplitting. A certain Democrat in the Oval Office must be having a good last laugh. ■

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Meet Jon Corzine, New Jersey's wealthiest liberal.

Gold Man

By JOHN B. JUDIS

NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

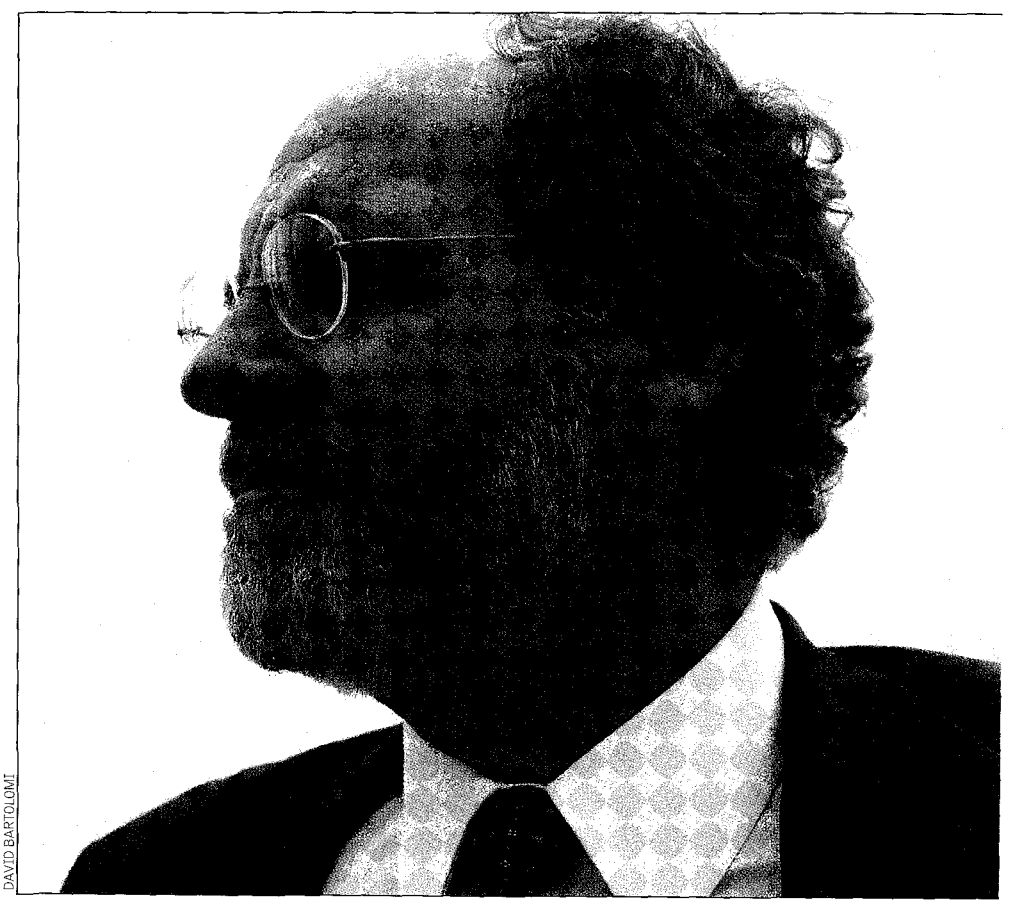
"DID I SOUND like I was a liberal and a progressive?" Jon Corzine asked me as we pulled out of the parking lot of a senior citizens' center in Monroe, New Jersey, where Corzine, a candidate for the U.S. Senate, had just addressed the local Democratic club. Corzine wasn't worried that he sounded *too* liberal and progressive. He was worried that he might not have sounded liberal and progressive *enough*. The former CEO of Goldman Sachs will be spending millions of dollars of his own fortune to run a campaign so left-leaning that it would make Minnesota's left-liberal Democratic senator, Paul Wellstone, blush.

Corzine's principal opponent for the Democratic nomination is former New Jersey Governor Jim Florio, who was defeated when he ran for reelection in 1993 because he had broken an earlier campaign promise not to raise taxes. Florio is a policy wonk who has taught courses in energy and environmental policy at Rutgers University. He still has a powerful base of supporters in southern New Jersey, where he served as a congressman, but he is hampered by continuing resentment among voters and Democratic politicians who blame him for making mistakes that led to Republican dominance of state politics in the '90s. No sooner had Florio signaled his intention to run for the seat being vacated by Senator Frank Lautenberg than Democratic officials, led by Senator Robert Torricelli, began casting about for an alternative. They found Corzine.

The 52-year-old Corzine, who resigned from Goldman Sachs almost a year ago, was a protégé of former Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin, a former Goldman CEO. Corzine helped Rubin raise money for Democratic candidates, but he never participated in New Jersey politics. He is still very green as a politician and sometimes sounds as if he were in the boardroom rather than on the hustings. On the day I accompanied him, he told the senior citizens in Monroe that he was about to give them the "bullet points" of his program, and he used business-school jargon such as "cyclalicity" when talking to small businessmen in Trenton. But Corzine has a modest appearance and a natural friendliness that serve him well among voters and reporters.

A tall, bearded man who was once a reserve on the University of Illinois basketball team, he slouches with his hands in the pockets of his gray suit jacket. He worries—justifiably—that he looks "rumpled." He has little of the hauteur common among many Wall Street masters of the universe; he's surprisingly at home exchanging pleasantries with a retired Cuban-American couple at a senior citizens' home in Union City or talking politics with a black minister in Trenton.

CORZINE WAS RAISED in a small town in central Illinois, where his father farmed and sold insurance. After receiving his bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois, he got a graduate degree in business from the University of Chicago and was off to Wall Street, where he rose quickly in Goldman Sachs's bond-trading department. When I asked



DAVID BARTOLOMI

The ex-banker...

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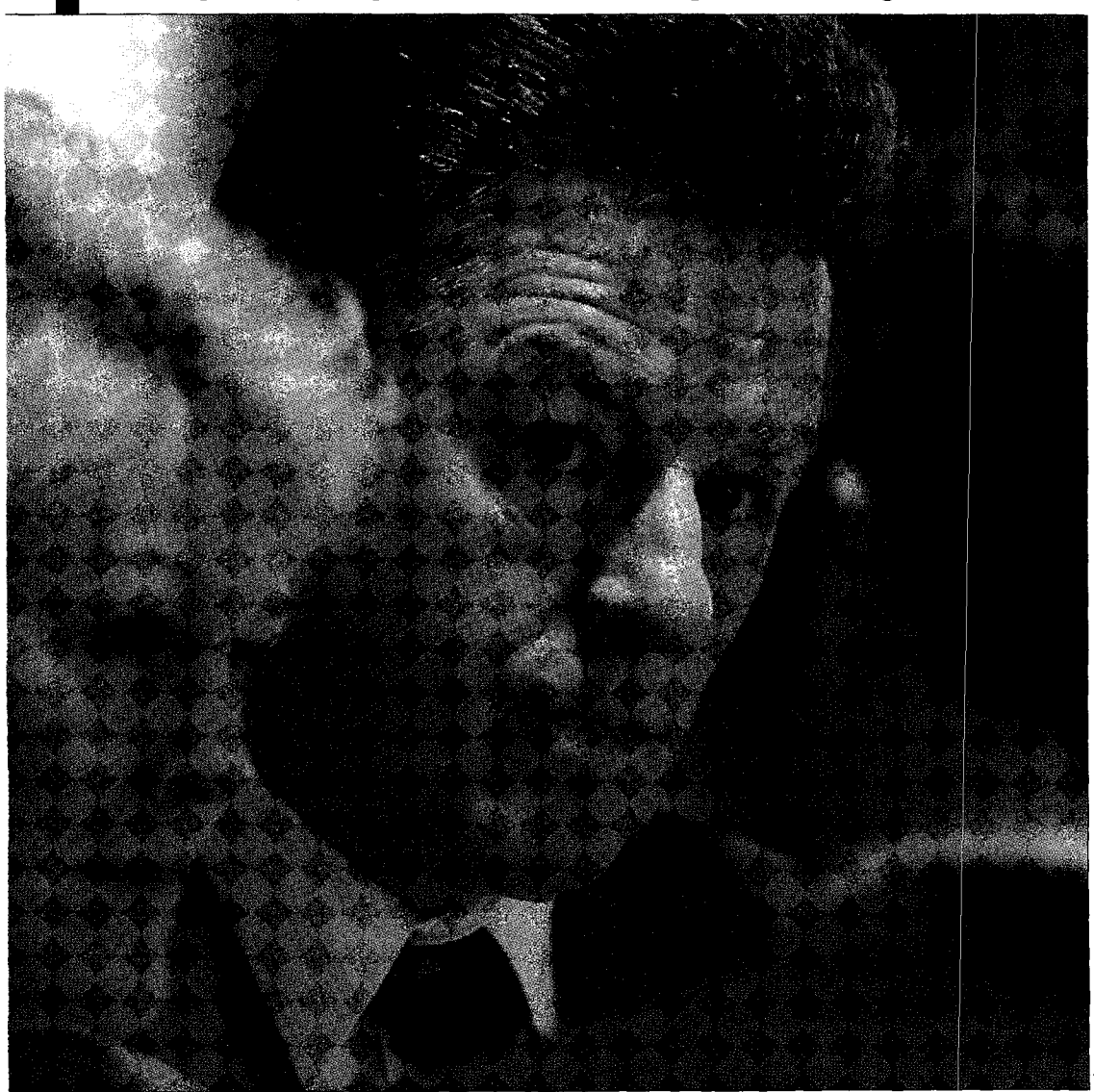
him how he became such a flaming liberal, he said that he was touched by a "King and two Kennedys." At Goldman Sachs, he said, he was "always outside the general mold." But, while Corzine is unusual, he is part of a tradition of upper-class progressives that goes back nine decades to House of Morgan men such as George Perkins, who bankrolled Theodore Roosevelt's Progressive Party, and Willard Straight, the first funder of THE NEW REPUBLIC.

The programs Corzine is championing would certainly place him at the far left of the ideological spectrum in the Senate. He would require all employers to provide health insurance and then would insure everyone else through a federal program. (He says the United States will eventually have a single-payer system.) He wants the government to pay for two years of college for every student who graduates high school with a B average. He wants to raise the minimum wage above the poverty line—which would mean increasing it from $5.15 an hour to about $8. He favors a "card-check" program that would force employers to recognize any union that got a majority of workers to sign membership cards. If the United States adopted this system, which is an important factor in the success of Canada's labor movement, it could raise the percentage of organized workers from 15 to 25 percent in one decade and completely change the dynamics of American politics and industry.

Corzine hasn't yet learned to construct his speeches around themes rather than programs, but, over a day's discussion, his underlying perspective clearly emerges: the democratic pluralism of the New Deal. He believes in a balanced society in which management and labor enjoy roughly equal power and public action compensates for the inequities created by the private market. He supports labor-law reform, he says, because "the ongoing balance between labor and management is out of whack." He says of government, "I am a capitalist who believes that the government has a role checking the excesses of the marketplace." But Corzine is not a populist or an economic nationalist. He is critical of the Clinton administration for bungling the deal worked out last spring to bring China into the World Trade Organization. And, like Rubin, he opposes programs designed to penalize companies that pay multimillion-dollar salaries to top executives.

In the Democratic primary, Corzine's principal strength is also his weakness: the $10 million of his own estimated $300 million fortune that he is threatening to spend. Corzine has tried to ingratiate himself with Democratic regulars by buying radio ads for local candidates in this November's elections, but he has offended some Democrats from old working-class strongholds. At a party celebration at the Polish National Home in Harrison, I heard rumbles of discontent. One man told me, "He is pulling up to towns with a dumpster filled with bags of money and leaving two bags here and five in Jersey City and Newark."



AP

... and the ex-boxer.

Corzine is not comfortable with this issue. When I asked him whether he favored campaign finance reform, he said he wanted to go well beyond the McCain-Feingold initiative and embrace "comprehensive reform"; but, when I pressed him for details, he could only come up with "open access to the airwaves." He said he would oppose closing the loophole in campaign law created by the Supreme Court decision in *Buckley* v. *Valeo*, which allows individuals such as himself and Steve Forbes to spend unlimited amounts on their own campaigns. "It gets right at the First

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Amendment," he said. When I asked him whether it was fair that a college president who wanted to run for office would not enjoy the same advantages that he had, he replied, "I am not saying that all aspects of campaign structures are attractive." He rejected a mutual limit on spending, saying it would amount to "unilateral disarmament."

IF CORZINE WINS the nomination, he will probably also face questions from Republicans about the economic consequences of his proposals. Without tax increases, the costs of his education and health care plans would plunge the budget back into deficit. When I asked him about the cost of his health care plan, he said that he would figure out specifics later. His plans on the minimum wage and on union recognition, along with his employer-paid health care, would dramatically increase labor costs. It may be that rapid increases in productivity would make these programs viable without creating a fiscal crisis or spurring capital flight. But it is also possible that they could cause the United States to become more like Germany or France, which have relatively high wages and generous social programs—but also high unemployment.

Florio has already challenged Corzine's positions on campaign finance reform, but he is not likely to attack the fiscal soundness or political correctness of Corzine's proposals. The two men are both on the party's left, with very similar positions on health care, the environment, gun control, abortion, and labor law. Instead, Florio will raise doubts about Corzine's credentials as a real Democrat. "I've been there before. I have scars on my back from the NRA," he said at a meeting organized by students at Seton Hall Law School and the Democratic Roundtable, a group of young Democrats.

Florio is a far more polished politician than Corzine and a better public speaker. He can emphasize points and hold an audience's attention by the timbre of his voice alone, without gesturing with his hands. But he lacks Corzine's amiable personality. Like Governor Parris Glendening of Maryland and other men who have raised themselves from humble circumstances to high office, Florio, a former boxer and a son of a Brooklyn shipyard worker, has put considerable emotional distance between himself and his roots. He is distant and reserved in his manner and is sometimes abstract and professorial in his approach to politics. At Seton Hall, he lost the attention of law students when he began describing at length the "iceberg issue" of pension reform. The student sitting next to me stopped taking notes and didn't resume until Florio began responding to a question about campaign finance reform.

Florio would like voters to forget about his governorship, but it keeps coming up. At Seton Hall, the very first question he faced was whether he had any regrets about raising taxes. Florio deals with this question as ineffectively as Corzine answers questions about campaign finance: he defends what he actually did and faults himself merely for failing to convince voters that it was a good thing. "I probably could have done a much better job trying to explain," he told the students. When I asked him afterward what he had learned from the opposition he incurred as governor, he seemed to blame his problems on voters' lack of attention to politics. "I was disabused of the idea that everybody is out there listening to politicians," he said. "It is hard to pierce through the clutter of all the problems people have, so we all have to figure out better ways of communicating, better ways of making things real, so that the things people are doing in Washington or Trenton or wherever relate to people's lives."

Florio certainly should not shoulder all the blame for his first-term defeat. When he took office, he faced a large deficit created by his Republican predecessor, Thomas Kean, and a court decision mandating increased spending on public schools. But Florio had promised not only to oppose tax increases but also to conduct an immediate state audit in order to cut spending. He broke both promises. He also raised and redirected spending on education without establishing tough standards to assure voters that the money would not be squandered. He fit the stereotype of the tax-and-spend liberal that voters rejected and that the Democrats of the '90s tried to move beyond (see John B. Judis, "A Taxing Governor," TNR, October 15, 1990).

Florio campaign consultant David Eichenbaum claims that the former governor still has the support of "core Democratic voters"; in my own brief survey of Democratic activists and officials, however, I found considerable skepticism about Florio's candidacy. Several people remarked that Florio was "damaged goods" and would be likely to lose in the general election, if not in the primary. To date, the only significant interest group to endorse Florio is the Sierra Club—a fitting tribute to Florio's sterling environmental record as a congressman and a governor. Corzine, for his part, has already gained endorsements from many of the state's key politicians. Under New Jersey's old-style election laws, his name will be put at the top of county ballots as the party's preferred choice. Although Corzine is still unknown in the state and trails Florio in polls, the primary election appears to be his to lose.

NEW JERSEY'S DEMOCRATIC primary could be an anomaly, or it could suggest that, after a decade of caution and retrenchment, the Democrats are once again embracing large-scale reform programs to alleviate social inequality. Although he prefers Vice President Al Gore for president, Corzine's campaign themes and programs clearly echo those of fellow New Jerseyan Bill Bradley.

The Democrats originally expected to face New Jersey Governor Christine Todd Whitman in November's Senate race, but Whitman withdrew from the contest in September. She said she didn't want to raise money, but she might also have seen polls that showed that she was vulnerable to a well-financed challenge from a candidate other than Florio. Representative Bob Franks is the best known of the current Republican candidates, but some conservatives are urging magazine heir Steve Forbes to drop out of the presidential race and run for Senate. A Corzine-Forbes race would pit the very liberal investment banker against the magazine-heir-turned-tribune of the supply-side right. The voters would get a clear choice, and media outlets and political consultants would make a fortune off the millions of dollars the two candidates would spend. ■

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Character As Destiny

THE VIEWER NEED not know David Lynch's reputation before seeing **The Straight Story** (Disney), but it helps. Here is a writer-director celebrated for his eccentricities, his disregard for convention, in such works as "Twin Peaks" and *Blue Velvet*, who has done a picture released by Disney, a picture based on the true story of an old man making a sentimental journey. Anyone ignorant of Lynch who sees *The Straight Story* will need an extra mite of patience to allow its beauty to unfold; others will be curious from the start about why this unconventional filmmaker chose this material, and that curiosity will speed up the unfolding.

The title is not really a pun: it simply uses a fact with a smile. This is a story about a man named Straight. In 1994 Alvin Straight, a seventy-four-year-old resident of Laurens, Iowa, traveled eastward across the state to visit his brother, Lyle, in Mount Zion, Minnesota. Lyle had suffered a stroke. Alvin wanted to see him before both of them passed on. He wanted to patch up relations with Lyle, whom he loved but with whom he had quarreled badly. Alvin was too infirm to drive a car, so he made the long trip on the only vehicle he could still manage, a lawn mower, to which he hitched a small trailer. It took Alvin many weeks to reach Mount Zion (this name is another useful coincidence), camping along the way and occasionally receiving hospitality from people he met. But he accomplished both his aims. (Alvin died in 1996.)

The story itself is *Reader's Digest* material. But with a concise screenplay by John Roach and Mary Sweeney, distilled in its dialogue and committed to verity of character, Lynch has made a small epic that echoes and enlarges in memory. He begins by insisting on the usual tempo of a Lynch film, an unapologetic *adagio*, implying that anything worth looking at is worth more than a hurried glance, unafraid of the latter-day shrunken attention span. Lynch's measured, attentive gaze assures us that he takes his story very seriously, and, unlike some other Lynch material, this story is so plain, so devoid of grotesquerie, that we soon see why he cannot be anything but serious about it. The subject is homespun, folksy; but to follow it with Lynch is to see Norman Rockwell become Thomas Eakins.

This is a resonant journey through a troubled life, encased in a grand deployment of the American heartland. We move through Alvin's past, including boyhood memories, memories of service in World War II, and the story of the seemingly impaired daughter who lives with him; but it is also a gallery of today's heartland people, including a runaway teenager whom he befriends and a Roman Catholic priest who befriends him (a Baptist, as he tells the priest). It is also, through the camera of the accomplished Freddie Francis, a poignant sprawl in the wide Midwest.

Soon we see that Alvin intends more than a brotherly visit. He refuses proffered transportation along the way because he wants to suffer the hardships of this journey; it is a penance, an expiation of past misjudgments. This journey is a gift that he is fashioning for his brother, as a craftsman might finish a fine object, which he wants to present to Lyle by the very fact of his arrival on this snail-paced lawnmower; so he must make this trip alone, this trip that at first looks ludicrous and cranky but that soon seems a spiritual pilgrimage.

Every detail in the film is perfect. Something that is often overlooked in pictures about rural America is carefully tended here: the people's accents. I'm not able to say that they all speak like Midwesterners, but they all sound credible as country people, and every role, no matter how small, from the dealer who sells Alvin the new lawn mower he needs (Everett McGill) to another old man with whom he exchanges grim war memories (Wiley Harker)—every role is put in place like a small gem in a crown. Harry Dean Stanton, who has perhaps two minutes on-screen at the end as Lyle, is, in a grateful word, fulfilling. Sissy Spacek gives Alvin's daughter warmth and the requisite secret scars.

But all these excellences would come to little without Richard Farnsworth. Born in the same year as Alvin, wrinkled and skinny and white-bearded, quiet yet dogged, Farnsworth performs a miracle. He has been knocking around in films for at least forty years, has been everything from a stunt man to an extra to a minor supporting player, and has sometimes had prominent parts in the Wilford Brimley vein, the by-cracky likable old hick. Here, no doubt aided by Lynch, Farnsworth understands his role as the one toward which his whole life has been winding, as if he were stepping into a better reincarnation of himself. It won't suffice to say that he never makes a false move: the highest compliment I can pay is that he made me think of the great Victor Sjöstrom in his last role, in Bergman's *Wild Strawberries*. Sjöstrom played an old professor journeying to a university town to receive an honorary degree, revisiting his life along the way—a valedictory performance by an important figure in film history. Farnsworth, arriving from a quite different past, places Alvin in the same company as Sjöstrom's professor, an archetypal portrayal of an old man near the end. Farnsworth's voice lingers in the mind. At one point a young man asks Alvin, in a friendly way, what the worst part is about getting old. Alvin says: "The worst part is rememberin' when you was young."

But *The Straight Story* goes past honesty. Without satire, with calm admiration, it presents a national self-image. Every country of which I have any knowledge has such a self-image. America likes to think of its ideal personification as a self-reliant, stubborn, humane yet taciturn, courageous loner—or at least someone who is willing to be alone if the situation demands it. (John Wayne, Gary Cooper, James Stewart.) Lynch's film is bifocal: it treats Alvin with complete authenticity, yet it also sees his story as an ideal—senescent this time, yet essentially the cherished romance.

Congratulations to Lynch and Farnsworth and everyone who contributed to this extraordinary film.

Women (WinStar), which insists on being called *Women (Elles)*, presents a different self-image—rather, a collection of them that meld into a sur-image. The subjects of this film are five women, played by two French actresses, a French-Swiss, a French-American, and a Spaniard. The film was written and directed by a Portuguese. It is spoken in French, but all the characters are supposed to be residents of Lisbon, where it was shot.

In order, these people are Miou-Miou, Guesch Piatti, Marthe Keller, Marisa Berenson, Carmen Maura, and Luis Galvão Teles. The five female characters know one another, or do so before the finish, and

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each of them has a story that links her with at least one of the others. The most interesting women are a widowed professor, played touchingly by Miou-Miou, who falls in love with one of her students, the son of Marthe Keller, the other endearing woman. Always an invaluable actress, Keller plays a divorcée whose ex-husband, a physician, is the first to suspect that she has a brain tumor. As these mere snippets may suggest, the whole picture is an elaborate soap opera, but it is made quite enjoyable by the fluent directing of Galvão Teles and the rich performances.

Arching over the various strands, the crises and resolutions, is the familiar image of the European Woman, sophisticated, frank and knowing about sex, capable of dealing adroitly with a tête-à-tête at a café table or with a grand climax à la Bernhardt. All of them, the cast and the director, are having such a good time in advancing this traditional fiction, and are so clever at it, that we enjoy the film, too—especially their (just faintly smug) pride in their Europeanness. ■

Martin Filler on Architecture
The Cultivator

THE MOST MARVELOUS work of architecture in New York is not a building, or even a bridge. It is the 840-acre environmental sculpture that is at once the heart, the lungs, and the soul of Manhattan. I am referring to Central Park, that rectangular green enclave that is bigger than the principality of Monaco, as is always pointed out, and is also an undisputed masterpiece of landscape design and a great work of civic art.

The truest measure of Central Park's enduring success is the irreplaceable part that it has played in the life of the metropolis since its initial phase of construction was completed in 1861 to the designs of Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux. From its very beginnings, New York has been a city of insatiable commercial appetite, and no structure in the city, not church nor skyscraper, not mansion nor museum, has been free from the possibility of being razed to make way for a more lucrative use of the land beneath it. Even cemeteries have been dug up or built over if the profit motive demanded the desecrations. Only Central Park survives as the single non-negotiable constant amid all the continuous change.

Those who try to tamper with Central Park do so at their peril. Though the park is now more crowded with buildings and monuments than its designers intended, attempts to encroach on the verdant preserve have been rebuffed often in recent decades. After the Metropolitan Museum of Art's grandiose expansion program was announced in 1969, the powerful institution was forced to scale back its massive incursions into the surrounding park. And in the early 1990s, when plans for a colossal high-rise development on Columbus Circle threatened to cast a large portion of the park into darkness after noon, the public outcry included a demonstration at which protestors simulated the proposed building's penumbra by opening a sea of umbrellas, a sort of do-it-yourself Christo installation.

The passion that Central Park arouses is not primarily aesthetic or even horticultural. It is the social understanding that its creators, and principally Olmsted, brought to their scheme that makes it so cherished and so essential to life on the densely populated island. "A man's eyes cannot be as much occupied as they are in large cities by artificial things," he wrote, "without a harmful effect, first on his mental and nervous system and ultimately on his entire constitutional organization." He believed that the citizenry's contact with nature by means of public parks was not an amenity but an imperative, "to refresh and delight the eye and through the eye, the mind and the spirit."

For all its wealth, New York still offers relatively few places that are specifically designed for non-commercial public congregation. The city does not afford adequate access to its extensive waterfront, as

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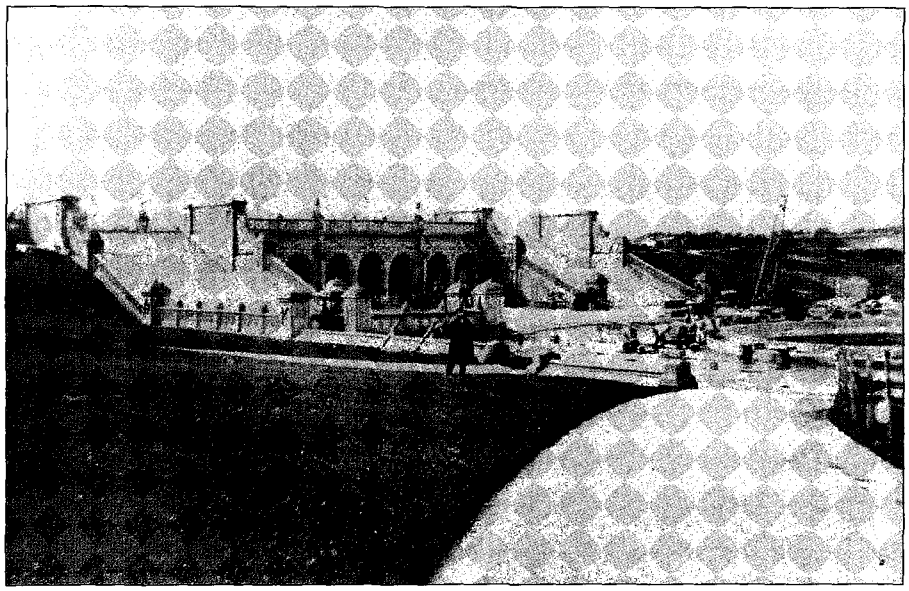
do the broad promenades along the Seine or the prospekts on the Neva. The wide, tree-lined boulevards of Paris were consciously designed for the leisurely strolls of the flâneur, but not the sidewalks of New York. The leafy squares of London are much more numerous and extensively distributed throughout the metropolis than New York's paltry equivalents. Italy's piazzas—beloved by American planners who vainly juxtapose images of St. Mark's Square with their own designs for open civic spaces—have never been translatable (despite the well-meaning attempts of New York zoning reformers in the 1960s)



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The Terrace, Central Park, New York, under construction, 1863

to Park Avenue or Sixth Avenue. Only Central Park frees Manhattan from the cage of its relentless, unimaginative grid plan, even though that orthogonal system determines the outer boundaries of the park.

More than one hundred and forty years after Olmsted and Vaux designed it, Central Park remains what its makers hoped it would become: a gathering point for all echelons of the city, an embracingly open space that visibly confirms the variety of the American democracy and its urban experience. More important than Olmsted's notion of it as a place where the lower classes could learn about nature, the great park brings social cohesion to a metropolis that has become ever more prone to the privatization of experience.

THERE IS A substantial body of first-rate scholarship on Olmsted, led by Laura Wood Roper's study, *FLO: A Biography of Frederick Law Olmsted*, which appeared in 1973 and remains the definitive book on the subject. As strong as the impulse may be to bring Olmsted's huge contribution to the attention of a new and environmentally conscious generation, the risks involved are considerable, as is demonstrated by the publication of two new books on the master.

Frederick Law Olmsted: Designing the American Landscape, by Charles E. Beveridge and the photographer Paul Rocheleau, first appeared in 1995 in a lavish coffee-table format from Rizzoli, edited and designed by David Larkin, who has masterminded some of the most stunning architecture books of the 1990s. But there can be too much of a good thing: the volume's unwieldy size and sumptuous production values diverted attention from the authoritative, concise, and wisely judged text of Beveridge, who is series editor of the Olmsted papers and a professor of history at American University. Still, the author's command of his source material is so solid that he can use a brief passage from Olmsted's writings to make an important point that takes other historians whole pages, and he achieves an intelligent balance between the life and the works; and this is all one could hope for in an introductory survey of its subject. A small-scale paperback version of that distractingly gorgeous first edition has been issued by Universe, and happily it retains all of Beveridge's text and Rocheleau's magnificent color photographs of Olmsted's parks and estates as they flourish today.

Witold Rybczynski's *A Clearing in the Distance: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the Nineteenth Century* (Scribner) is quite a different matter. For more than a decade now, Rybczynski has made a considerable reputation for himself as the author of a series of general-interest books on architecture and city planning, including *Home*, *Waiting for the Weekend*, and *Looking Around*. The popular success of those books presumably prompted the University of Pennsylvania School of Architecture to see him as a star and to give him an endowed professorship in urbanism.

Rybczynski possesses an astounding self-confidence that allows him to churn out work of quite remarkable naïveté, and to believe that vapidity is the same thing as accessibility. Could he have been sought out by Penn for the middling architectural talents that he displayed in his modestly titled book *The Most Beautiful House in the World*, a self-congratulatory account of his design and construction of a thoroughly forgettable country retreat for himself in his native Canada? Could he have been admired for the jejune social observations that he delivered about Paris in *City Life*?:

> Like young Germans and young Britishers, many young Frenchmen and Frenchwomen were wearing some combination of that now international uniform of jeans, sneakers, and T-shirts. People carried plastic shopping bags instead of the traditional stringed *filets*, and some wore Walkmans instead of berets.... On the whole, there were, I thought, fewer fashionable women; perhaps in Paris, it wasn't chic to be chic that year, I'm not sure. People appeared less formal, but they still spoke rapidly and smoked a lot.

A Tocqueville (to whom he devotes a singularly unilluminating chapter in *City Life*) he is obviously not; but still less is he a Lewis Mumford or even a Jane Jacobs. His tired rehashes of the principles of modern urban design and their historical origins are well below the level of introductory textbooks on the subject, and his epiphanies are astonishing for his lack of self-awareness about how boring and pointless they are. On community life in his current home in the Chestnut Hill section of Philadelphia, Rybczynski writes:

> ...I joined my neighbors in what I discovered is a semi-annual event. The anomalous sight of a retired business executive raking leaves, and a turbaned matron chain-sawing dead trees seemed slightly ridiculous and also discouraging. After all, this was the sort of maintenance traditionally held to be the job of the public authorities, whose inability to perform even such humdrum tasks seemed to me evidence of serious urban decline. But on second thought I changed my mind. Decline there might be, but our efforts were not worthy of ridicule. Here were citizens reaffirming a small measure of control over their shared physical surroundings, and demonstrating a sense of community, which is part of what cities

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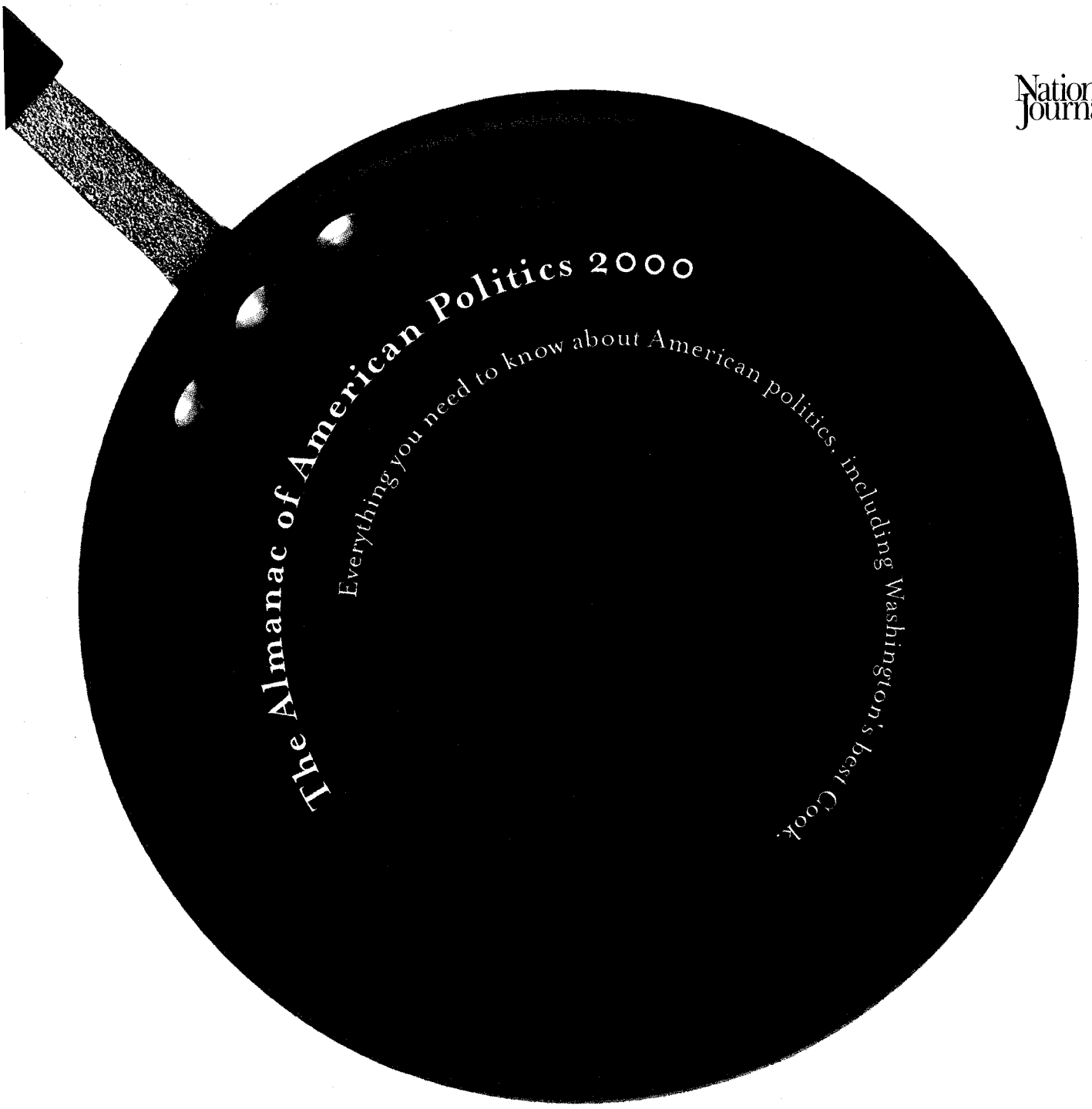
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are about—or should be.

As I was heaving branches into the Dumpster, I was reminded that the city of the future, whatever form it takes, will depend on the goodwill of its citizens for its well-being.

Even if Rybczynski actually believes that all trees, and their leaves and branches, grow on public property rather than private property, or that doing spring or fall yardwork is a sign of civic decay, this is hardly the most urgent issue to engage the attention of an expert on urbanism.

STILL, HIS BENIGN maunderings may be preferable to Rybczynski the Man of Action. The extremely simplistic thinking that he recently displayed in "How to Save our Shrinking Cities," an article that he wrote with Peter D. Linneman and published in *The Public Interest* earlier this year, makes one wish that he had stuck to his own backyard. Cities throughout history have always waxed and waned in size—the fluctuations of Rome over the past two millennia provide the classic example—but there is precious little that governments can do to offset the economic forces that lie at the heart of such demographic shifts, especially in the free-market economy of the United States; yet Rybczynski and Linneman propose that cities

> could de-annex parts of their territory to private developers. If large tracts, in excess of 100 acres, say, were sold as de-annexed, unincorporated areas with associated suburban cost structures, it is possible that developers would find this an attractive opportunity to create new "suburban" municipalities in the central areas of the city.

Their examples of this strategy—River Oaks in Houston and Highland Park and University Park in Dallas—are in fact symptomatic of the multi-nuclear urban sprawl that has done nothing to strengthen the cores of those cities, and have more to do with the "edge cities" that are seen as the major culprit in the dissolution of downtowns across the country. Inviting commercial real estate speculators into the process is a surefire prescription for disaster, with the only guaranteed results being a proliferation of shopping malls and roadside strip construction. But Rybczynski writes as if the most oppressed class in the American city are the developers.

There is no disgrace in seeking to reach a mass audience. There should be a great deal more writing about architecture and urban design for the general public. But it is the dumbed-down discourse that Rybczynski has perfected that makes his work so objectionable. Whatever Rybczynski's skills as a feel-good essayist and a purveyor of banalities on the built environment, he is most assuredly no historian, and his arrogance in approaching a topic as monumental as Olmsted is a little breathtaking. His new book has the superficial aura of diligent scholarship: the thirty-two pages of notes are most heavily peppered with the abbreviation for his subject's papers, FLOP; but FLOP have been available on microfilm for the past quarter-century, and Rybczynski relies much too heavily on them.

Despite the book's sweeping subtitle, there is little evidence that Rybczynski did enough to avail himself of the vast resources for placing Olmsted in his larger historical context. Olmsted wrote the most cogent contemporary critique of the antebellum South in *The Cotton Kingdom: A Traveler's Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States*, based on his sojourns and newspaper dispatches of the early 1850s and published in book form in 1861; and during the Civil War he served as the executive director of the United States Sanitary Commission (a precursor of the Red Cross). But Rybczynski gives only the sketchiest sense of the political, military, and spiritual conflict that tore Olmsted's country apart.

Similarly, he provides almost no account of the growing awareness of the social benefits of public works during the decades following the war—the moral climate that prompted patronage for the landscape architect's great sequence of parks across the country. From Rybczynski we get Olmsted in a vacuum, isolated from the events and the forces that made him such an engaged citizen and such an energetic reformer. Rybczynski's plodding biography lacks any discernible overarching argument, and sets forth no convincing case for what made Olmsted so extraordinary even among a circle of contemporaries (and creative equals) that included Walt Whitman, Henry Adams, H. H. Richardson, Thomas Eakins, and Mark Twain, to name only a few.

RYBCZYNSKI LIKES HIS subject, but his openly expressed frustration with him at times hints at the underlying problem. "And now, I find myself becoming impatient with Olmsted," he writes at one point. "Why can't he just get on with it?" This is precisely the question that the reader wants to ask Rybczynski himself, who pushes forward with dogged determination, but without any discernible inspiration. And then there is Rybczynski's writing. Unable to bestir himself from an endless drone of flat, simple declarative prose, which he must consider a requisite for the mass market, he falls into the narcotizing tic of beginning sentence after sentence after sentence with "He," three, four, five, even six in a row, no fewer than forty times throughout the book.

> He gave up the compulsive habit that he had fallen into while at the Sanitary Commission of working late into the night and rising at noon. He ate regularly—Mary saw to that. He stopped writing and dictated letters and reports to Henry Perkins. He learned to pace himself. He and Mary went riding every afternoon, often accompanied by the children on their donkeys—Kitty, Fanny, and Beppo.

Or consider this riveting account of the young Olmsted in New York:

> Olmsted didn't live in the city. He commuted to work by ferry across the East River from Brooklyn. Brooklyn had benefitted from the growth of New York. While it was larger than Hartford, it still had some of the atmosphere of a small town. Perhaps that's why John Olmsted, who had accompanied his son to New York to make sure he was well installed, chose it. Or maybe he just wanted to make sure that the lures of Manhattan lowlife were kept at a distance.

EVEN MORE ANNOYING than Rybczynski's penchant for childish sentence structure and his flair for the obvious are the ten imagined scenes from Olmsted's life with which he has salted his book. Though he based some of the information in these interludes (set off in italic type from the rest of the text) on documented sources, the results are both counterfeit and cloying. My favorite is a three-page fantasia on a dark and stormy night—Tuesday, October 12, 1847—that Olmsted spent at his farm at Great Point, Sachem's Head, Connecticut, replete with the author's signature "He . . . He . . . He . . .":

> *A gust of wind rattles the shutters and drives the rain hard against the windowpanes. He goes outside, partly to check on the barn, and partly just to enjoy the blustery weather. He looks back to the rocky promontory, west of the house. He shudders to remember that this is said to be the site of the oak tree where a Pequot sachem's severed head had once been exposed to serve as a warning to his fellow tribesmen with whom the English settlers were battling. Probably just a story, and two hundred years old now, although he has found a weathered old oak stump on the bluff. He walks toward the shore.*

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Across the water he can see the dark hulk of the hotel. He can also see the white foam of the surf. There is a low booming sound, far away. The locals say it is the roar of the breakers on the exposed Atlantic shore of Long Island. The storm reminds him of his time at sea. God have mercy on sailors on a night like this, he thinks. He goes back inside, turns down the lamp, and goes to bed. Nep snores contentedly.

Leaving aside the excruciating final sentence about Olmsted's dozing dog Neptune—reaction shots of animals are infra dig even in Hollywood—there is so much supposition and speculation that this and its companion set pieces are worthless to the serious reader. In some places, Rybczynski dispenses with the cautionary italics altogether, and guilefully introduces his surmises into the main text. As he writes of one of Olmsted's formative childhood nature walks with his brother, never stinting on the masculine third-person singular pronoun or the sentimentality:

> I imagine their adventure. It is a sunny day. The dusty road outside Hartford winds its way through rolling meadows. Olmsted is in the lead, probably talking, pointing out birds and trees in the hedgerows along the verge. He is excited about the prospect of adventure. He holds his younger brother by the hand. John is less sure about the outing. He is thinking that perhaps they should go home before it gets too late. But he goes along, trusting that Frederick will find the way, as he always seems to do.

Though this playing fast and loose with the conventions of historiography seems less startling in the aftermath of Edmund Morris's mischievous auto-metamorphosis into Dutch Reagan's imaginary friend, it is just as egregious. I have little doubt that *A Clearing in the Distance* will reach a wide audience. This is a pity, for it is inconceivable that the average reader will come away from it with a proper appreciation of Olmsted's central place in the culture of his times and his continuing relevance to our own.

Fortunately, Lewis Mumford's pioneering work *The Brown Decades: A Study of the Arts in America, 1865-1895*, which appeared in 1931, is still in print. In it one can find the best brief summary of Olmsted's importance in the fifteen pages devoted to him. Mumford does not provide detailed analyses of Olmsted's major projects, but his profound understanding of the man "who almost single-handed laid the foundations for a better order in city building" shows how complex ideas can be presented to the educated layman with no diminution of meaning and no lowering of tone.

BORN IN HARTFORD in 1822, Olmsted was the son of a successful merchant, and his father's continuing financial support (much like the parental backing enjoyed by Olmsted's younger, equally reform-minded, and nature-loving contemporary William Morris) gave him the luxury of taking a very long time to figure out what to do with his life. His education was episodic, beginning with being sent away from home at the age of seven to board with a series of country clergymen-tutors. Though his brother John went to Yale and he could have done so as well, Olmsted hung around the campus and later briefly enrolled as a special student there to learn the principles of scientific farming. As he recalled:

> At the time my schoolmates were entering college, I was nominally the pupil of a topographical engineer but really for the most part given over to a decently restrained vagabond life, generally pursued under the guise of an angler, a fowler or a dabbler on the shallower shores of the deep sea of the natural sciences.

Mumford, himself an autodidact, was particularly responsive to Olmsted's improvised training. As he wrote in *The Brown Decades*:

> This combination of wide traveling, shrewd observation, intelligent reading, and practical farming formed Olmsted's education: it was plainly a far more substantial discipline than the courses he had taken intermittently at Yale, never long enough to receive a degree. This was the American education at its best—when dispersed and fitful, lacking an inner core, it created the shiftless and all too adaptable pioneer: but, when integrated, as it was in literature by Whitman and Melville, in economics by Henry George, and in landscape design by Olmsted, it must be compared to the very best culture of the Renaissance for an equivalent.

On the biographical evidence, Olmsted seems to have suffered some form of manic-depression, for throughout his life he was prone to sustained bursts of extraordinary energy and intense productivity followed by periods of illness and despond, a pattern that could help to account for his desultory approach in finding fulfilling work.

Travel was ingrained in Olmsted since childhood as the most authentic way of experiencing the world. His father took the family on annual "tours in search of

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the picturesque," a very early example, in America at least, of scenic tourism, many decades before the establishment of the National Parks, which Olmsted's work was to do so much to encourage. (In the 1860s he drew up plans for making Yosemite accessible to tourists and urged that the government preserve such unspoiled treasures.) But not all of Olmsted's travel experiences were so salubrious. At one juncture in his search for a career, the 21-year-old signed on as a ship's boy for a near-disastrous voyage to China, an experience of unimagined privation that further undermined his already precarious health.

CONCERNED THAT HIS son at last embark on some livelihood, Olmsted's father bought him a farm on the Connecticut coast of Long Island Sound in 1847, and a year later the young man moved to a farm on Staten Island. Engrossed though he was in rural pursuits, his new home put him in striking distance of New York and the progressive thinkers of the time. Chief among them in Olmsted's chosen field was the horticulturist and writer Andrew Jackson Downing, the most influential figure in American landscape architecture before Olmsted himself.

Downing had imbibed from some of the same British garden design sources as the young Olmsted, but Downing was determined to translate those principles of suitability and taste into something distinctively American. Both men followed the romantic, picturesque English approach toward emphasizing and improving what was already there in nature, as opposed to the grand French tradition of imposing a highly rationalized and clearly artificial scheme on the landscape. "I would not attempt to change the very pleasing natural character," Olmsted once told the owner of a seaside property on the rock-bound North Shore of Boston. "I would take this present character and work it up." He always applied what he called "art to conceal art," that apparent effortlessness that is the hallmark of the consummate artist.

Olmsted's great clarification of purpose came during his revelatory journey to England in 1850. That green and pleasant land, transformed into a veritable garden by the hand of man over scores of generations, made such an overwhelming impression on the American that he finally knew what his vocation would be. As Olmsted wrote at the time:

> What artist so noble, as he, who with far-reaching conception of beauty and designing power, sketches the outline, writes the colours and directs the shadows of a picture so great that Nature shall be employed upon it for generations, before the work he has arranged for her shall realize his intentions.

Olmsted, of course, had far more in mind than the aesthetic interests that he expressed in this avowal of landscape architecture (a term that he disliked) as the ultimate artistic medium. On that trip, the young American was profoundly impressed by a chance visit to Birkenhead Park in Liverpool, a public pleasure ground designed by Sir Joseph Paxton, best-known as the designer of the Crystal Palace of 1850-51 in London. Birkenhead was one of the first urban parks designed expressly for the general populace, as opposed to such recycled former royal hunting preserves as Green Park and Hyde Park in London and the Bois de Boulogne and Bois de Vincennes in Paris. "In democratic America there is nothing to be thought of as comparable with this People's Garden," Olmsted wrote. He began to formulate how that idea could be translated back home.

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT first proposed a great central park for New York in 1844, and the idea gained so much popular support that it became a campaign issue in the mayoral election of 1850. Downing made the cause his own, tirelessly promoting the creation of a public pleasure ground in his publications. Like Whitman, who thrilled at the well-read mechanics and artisans who thronged the theater and opera in New York, Downing dreamed of an educated American yeomanry, a culturally enlightened working class that could only be brought into being by the free and equal availability of uplifting works of nature, art, and design.

Downing saw the promulgation of taste by those means as nothing less than "the outward mark of education, moral sentiment, love of home, and refined cultivation, which makes the main difference between Massachusetts and Madagascar." But Downing's sudden death in 1852 robbed the gathering enterprise of its most likely designer. And where could another highly qualified practitioner be found with as keenly developed a sense of social mission?

A series of detours during that decisive decade in Olmsted's life took him on his travels through Texas and the South and onto the books he wrote about them; to his new roles as managing editor of *Putnam's Monthly Magazine* (where he published Melville's *Benito Cereno* and Thoreau's *Cape Cod*) and co-founder of *The Nation*; to his partnership in a New York publishing firm; and to another long European sojourn. But then, like many other budding entrepreneurs, Olmsted was wiped out in the Panic of 1857, and was forced to find another source of income.

Through his various occupations as farmer, journalist, and publisher he had identified in himself one outstanding trait—a gift for organization; and he saw his chance to exercise it on a grand scale in the newly created post of superintendent of Central Park, which project was about to get underway after years of discussion. He won the job in 1857 largely because of his political disinterestedness, which was a rare quality amid the corrupt partisanship of nineteenth-century New York politics

OLMSTED'S AMBITIONS WENT far beyond that of a municipal sinecure. He wished to design the park itself, to put into action the theories that he had been developing over his preceding decade of active horticulture, and to put to the test his evolving conception of modern man in the landscape. He was canny enough to enlist the collaboration of the English-born architect Calvert Vaux (who had worked for Downing) in the preparation of the Central Park competition entry that they called "Greensward."

Like many other great works of environmental art, such as Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel or Bernini's Scala Regia, the particular brilliance of the Olmsted and Vaux scheme rests on how deftly it overcomes the limitations of the immovable givens and completely obviates them. In this case, the designers were hampered by the awkward proportions of the site, more than four times as long as it is wide, a ratio well in excess of the A:B= B:(A+B) formula dictated by the Golden Section, the ordering system of the classicists.

Moving through Central Park, of course, one has no impression of its being an elongated shoebox in outline; but this is the happy consequence of the diagonal vistas that Olmsted and Vaux cleverly established to create the illusion of greater width. The path from the southeast corner at Fifth Avenue and Fifty-ninth Street to the Bethesda Fountain, parallel to Seventy-second Street, imperceptibly leads the visitor from the outer edge of the park to its lengthwise midpoint. Throughout the park, snaking pathways heighten the feeling of extended space, shifting one's attention from the circumferential city to the interior of the park and then outward, time and time again.

Not the least of the designers' masterstrokes was to segregate the vehicular traffic of three of the four crosstown transverses below grade, freeing the pedestrian and bridle paths above from the distrac-

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tion of fast-moving conveyances. Moreover, Olmsted and Vaux placed the primary north-south drives as close to the rectangular periphery as the naturalistic contours of those roadways would allow. This humane hierarchy would serve as a model for a new reformist generation of American planning reformers : the architect Clarence Stein, who designed the new town of Radburn, New Jersey with Henry Wright in 1928, got the idea to strictly separate automobile and ambulatory circulation in that innovative suburban scheme when he was looking out at Olmsted and Vaux's multiple circulation scheme from his apartment on Central Park West.

THE SUCCESS OF Central Park was immediate and immense; but the outbreak of the Civil War put the project's completion on hold, as Olmsted took up his Sanitary Commission duties. He was eased out of his roles as superintendent and architect-in-chief of the park, though he did return briefly, from 1875 to 1877, to supervise additional landscaping. He and Vaux collaborated again on Brooklyn's Prospect Park, which was begun in 1865. Many critics deem Prospect Park superior to Central Park in purely aesthetic terms. Prospect Park is distinguished by its lozenge-shaped outline, its freedom from traffic transverses, and its dazzling scenic effects, such as the Ravine (with artificial waterfalls) and the rhododendron-banked valley that became known (though Olmsted hated the exotic appellation) as the Vale of Cashmere. Prospect Park became a Garden of Eden for the large immigrant groups who made Brooklyn their home in the decades after the scheme's completion in 1895, a glorious fulfillment of Olmsted's vision of a populist paradise.

Brooklyn was further beautified by another Olmsted and Vaux innovation. In 1868 the partners laid out Eastern Parkway, a boulevard that runs from Prospect Park to Fort Hamilton on the Narrows of New York Harbor. The design was based on the avenue de l'Impératrice (now avenue Foch) in Paris by Baron Haussmann's associate Jean Alphand, which Olmsted saw on his trip in 1856. Brooklyn's first version of that tree-shaded thoroughfare, with narrow service roads flanking the broad central avenue, was conceived as a vehicular speedway, though at less than a mile long it was not extensive enough to permit much acceleration.

Olmsted and Vaux's six-mile-long Ocean Parkway of 1870-74 gave full scope to the concept. Here is how the designers described their interconnecting sequence of parkways and parks, quoted by Rybczynski in a rare moment in which his book springs to life:

> Such an arrangement would enable a carriage to be driven on the half of a summer's day, through the most interesting parts of both of the cities of Brooklyn and New York, through their most attractive suburbs, and through both their great parks; having a long stretch of the noble Hudson with the Palisades in the middle distance, and the Shawangunk range of mountains in the background, in view at one end, and the broad Atlantic with its foaming breakers rolling on the beach, at the other.

The parkway idea was used by forward-thinking public works administrators to enhance new inter-city roadways during the 1920s and 1930s, giving us some of the most attractive vehicular routes in America, including several built by Robert Moses in the New York metropolitan area where Olmsted and Vaux introduced the form. Ocean Parkway offers an instructive lesson to this day. Even though it is now lined with ordinary private dwellings and apartment houses, the majestic avenue itself reminds us of the impact that great urban design can confer even in the absence of great architecture.

COMMISSIONS BEGAN TO pour in to Olmsted and Vaux after these highly publicized triumphs. Expanding their practice beyond the East Coast, they planned the suburb of Riverside, Illinois and a series of parks for Chicago. In 1872, the partners decided to go their separate ways, Vaux to concentrate on his big commissions for the new art and natural history museums on opposite sides of Central Park, Olmsted to develop the national practice that he had long desired. The decades ahead brought his designs for a number of cities, none more magnificent than Boston's park system, the aptly nicknamed "Emerald Necklace" that is indeed one of the most enviable adornments of an American city, though parts of it are now sadly tarnished.

Olmsted also understood the power of national icons. He salvaged Niagara Falls from a tawdry commercialism that compromised the dignity of the legendary cascade, urging the removal of advertising signs and the public purchase of undeveloped Goat Island, which preserves some degree of natural wildness. Most appropriately, he landscaped the grounds of the United States Capitol, carefully placing trees to frame vistas of, and thereby to give scale to, the oversized dome, and constructing the great terraces of the West Front to integrate the top-heavy building more satisfyingly into its sloping site. During his fruitful career, he did much the same for the country at large, grounding it to a land that had been occupied but never as brilliantly inhabited until he set his humane and artful hand to it.

Olmsted died in 1903, but he left a legacy that still has much to teach us. At a time when the values of the marketplace infest every aspect of our national life, it is instructive to consider his apolitical brand of civic improvement. He was no sentimental do-gooder, and still less an ideologue; he was a hard-headed realist who understood that making our cities better places for all would benefit the rich as much as the poor. The wisdom of investing public monies in projects that would pay the likely dividend of reduced social costs seemed self-evident to him. He saw America's scenic heritage as an indispens-

Ka

The Fayum mummy portraits

Graeco-Egyptians, Ptolemy's distant sons,
inherited the land, a coinage, and an attitude.
Dark-eyed, long-nosed, half-Asian, half-European,
they can't stay dead, rising from the sand
like new-fledged falcons to the startled light,
shocked by how easy it was to die.
In flaking emerald and corrupted pearl,
the torpor of millennia underground
tears at their ball-gown tunics and half-smiles,
faces that found their language invisible—
the secret of their afterlife was, no afterlife.
Those who wrapped in cloth their fathers, daughters,
took these last photographs in paint and buried them,
their lust a living passion toward the dead.

William Logan

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able resource for future generations, and felt it only reasonable to remove it from the grasp of private speculators.

Those are very simple concepts. Why have they come under such furious attack lately? The answer to that pained question might begin by observing that Olmsted's humane outlook, rooted in nineteenth-century liberalism, was an antidote to the economic rapaciousness of his time, and something like it might serve as an antidote to the cupidity of our own time, too. Most significantly, Olmsted's design principles went far deeper than physical beautification. His comprehensive view of how to build a just society by creating better communities stands in stark contrast to today's market-driven urban planning, or what now passes for it. Only when that fundamental fallacy is corrected will we begin to approach Olmsted's towering example. ■

The Male Eunuch

By JAMES WOLCOTT

Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man by Susan Faludi

(William Morrow & Co., 662 pp., $27.50)

AS IF MEN hadn't suffered enough indignities of late (loss of breadwinner status, declining sperm counts, TV ads targeting erectile dysfunction and hair loss), along comes Susan Faludi, offering soothing words and a lump of sugar. Like a horse whisperer, she feels men's pain and wants to coax them out of the barn, one hoof ahead of the other. She isn't being deliberately patronizing, which makes her tender concern all the more shaming. Men are now officially pathetic.

After stirring up the henhouse with her best-selling and award-winning tract *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*, a warning cry about the secret plot to reverse feminist gains by brainwashing women with stick-figure fashion images and false idols such as Camille Paglia, Faludi has concluded six years of research with *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, which declares that men are not guilty of being the enemy. They are not the mobilizers and the beneficiaries of the backlash. No, they are victims, too, dazed captives in a jar. "[A]s the nation wobbled toward the millennium," Faludi writes, "its pulse-takers seemed to agree that a domestic apocalypse was under way: American manhood was under siege."

Like women, Faludi argues, men are judged today on their cosmetic appearance and their market value rather than their inner worth, forced to parade down the catwalk of consumerism's "beauty pageant" and to compete in the swimsuit competition, "where the odds did not seem to be on the men's side." As men lose to women in the looks department, they blame women for their second-class showing. They shouldn't. "[J]ust because men have wound up in a beauty-contest world doesn't mean women have put them there. The gaze that plagues them doesn't actually spring from a feminine eye," Faludi observes, borrowing a term from cultural studies and beating it senseless. "The gaze that hounds men is the very gaze that women have been trying to escape." It is the cyclops eye of "ornamental culture," a Hollywood/Madison Avenue/glossy-magazine creation that saps everyone's vital essences like a ray of Kryptonite. Only by poking out this prison searchlight can the sexes join forces and rise to confront their overseers. Runway models of the world, unite!

Other commentators have called for a truce between the sexes and a marriage of common interests (Cathy Young's *Ceasefire!* is a spirited example), but Faludi plays peacemaker on an epic scale, as if mending a continental divide. Despite its irate title and a cover photo by Gordon Parks of a representative hardworking American Joe, *Stiffed* is a gentler dispatch than *Backlash*, more of a soft sell than a wake-up call. In a cover story for *Newsweek* Faludi was photographed inside sitting on the floor in a pixie pose, holding her bare toes and looking disarmingly girly, as if to say, "Me, a scary feminist? How silly!"

Like Edmund Morris with his biographical "memoir" of Ronald Reagan, Faludi couches her book as a personal odyssey. (There are no impersonal odysseys anymore.) "This is the story of a feminist's travels through a postwar male realm," she writes. "It is also a reflection of my own mental journey as I struggled to understand the perilous voyage to manhood undertaken by the men I once knew as boys..." A wayfarer with an agenda, she traveled the length and the breadth of America on her own listening tour, sprinkling a little empathy wherever she went.

Her safari took her into a country where men continue to lead lives of quiet desperation, and yet, like the "silenced" women in *Backlash*, are quite talkative. Exploring the fringes of male tribal behavior on the premise that what happens at the edges creeps into the center, Faludi suspends judgment no matter what nonsense she hears. Whether she is interviewing troubled souls in the Promise Keepers, a football fanatic who daubs his face every Sunday, or a former go-go boy who felt so *used* ("'I felt degraded,' he said, and his analysis of his degradation was one any female stripper would find familiar"), you can picture her nodding with understanding, like Judy Woodruff in a cutaway shot.

FALUDI MAY BE a good listener, but as a writer she has both mitts choking the steering wheel. With its hokey subheads ("Cause Without a Rebel," "This Eager Violence of the Heart," "A Woodsman in a Microwave World"), its oracular utterances ("a man didn't have to go to Vietnam to confront the jungle"), and its pat generalizations too boring to quote, Faludi's tome is an almost self-parodying product of crisis-mongering newsmagazine journalese, squeezing the life out of every topic to make a debatable point. Sentence after sentence unfurls like the flag at Iwo Jima as the author surveys the Zeitgeist to stereophonic fanfare, conflating the president of the United States with Obi-Wan Kenobi: "If Ronald Reagan was the fantasy elder come to lead the sons in triumphal battle against the Evil Empire, when the credits rolled and the sons awoke from the stardusted dream, most felt farther away from the promised land of adult manhood—less triumphal, less powerful, less confident of making a living or providing for a family or contributing productively to society."

Faludi inflates the significance of a continuing identity crisis at *Details* magazine—its gawky metamorphosis from a gay-oriented downtown journal into a

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swinging-bachelors guide—into a soap opera of grave import. Watching the new editor and his art director ponder a lingerie spread, she remarks that "the gaze, it seemed, had at last reverted to its traditional vector, the male eye viewing the female body." When the gaze goes on the blink and *Details* suffers another editorial convulsion, she intones with Vulcan solemnity, "The magazine's invasion of the 'feminine' ornamental sphere had failed." Return to the ship. (Curiously, Faludi effaces her own bit part in this saga, treating the *Details* office as just another stop on her journey. In fact she was hired as a contributing editor at *Details* by the very editor overseeing the "hetero-izing" revamp that she characterizes in *Stiffed* as an attempt "to hide from male readers their own fears of their own naked passivity in the face of display culture, their own prone positions as the objects of corporate desire." Kinky!)

Incapable of poison-dart wit or flat assertion, Faludi employs hypnotic repetition as her chief power of persuasion, massaging the reader into trance-like submission. Whether the reader is nodding in agreement or just plain nodding off seems lost on her. As she murmurs the same phrases over and over and as her metaphors become fruitful and multiply ("Lured from my intended course, I sometimes lost sight of the bright beacons and media buoys marking the shoals where men and women clashed, and also lost sight of that secure shore..."; "Its surge had washed all the men of the American Century into a swirling ocean of..."; "Its tsunami force had swamped...," "If there was an enemy behind this cultural sea change..."; "Navigating the ornamental realm..."), every chapter becomes longer than it needs to be, and every chapter seems longer than the one before, creating the illusion of a book feeding on itself and engulfing unsuspecting villagers.

To get a handle on her swelling narrative, Faludi uses segues and cinematic crosscutting ("Across the continent from Condé Nast headquarters, in a small corner of the San Fernando Valley...") to foster the impression that postwar history is a streaming montage—an Altman-like epic where every fluky thing connects. However far the book roams, though, it holds fast to a simple story-idea. The idea is that the American man is a disappointed boy.

Faludi tells this story in the form of a space-age parable. In the opening chapter, punnily titled "The Son, the Moon, and the Stars," Faludi imagines a typical boy in a Davy Crockett cap standing with his father in the suburban backyard. The two of them stare upward, tracking the gleaming speck of a manned spacecraft passing in orbit. It is a Spielberg-like epiphany that ends in a Springsteen-like lament. "When I talk with men who grew up during the baby boom," Faludi writes, "this mission to manhood shows up in their minds not as promises met but betrayals, losses, and disillusionment. It is as if a generation of men had lined up at Cape Kennedy to witness the countdown to liftoff, only to watch the rocket—containing all their hopes and dreams—burn up on the launchpad." This fizzling letdown is the result of a generation of boys being raised by fathers who emotionally stranded them.

Susan Faludi by Vint Lawrence for The New Republic

After World War II and Korea, Faludi contends, veterans returned to civilian life with a stoicism that locked out everyone who hadn't shared their harrowing experiences, and even those who had shared them. They put the past behind them with a vengeance, swapping their khakis for gray flannel suits. They married, moved to the suburbs, and stowed their worries in a briefcase, sipping their cocktails after a hard day at the office in enforced silence. Don't bother your father, he has a lot on his mind. "The sons grew up with fathers who so often seemed spectral, there and yet not there, 'heads' of household strangely disconnected with the familial body."

And so, instead of initiating their sons into manhood, these holograms in cardigan sweaters, as bland and puzzled "as those perfect dads on television," bequeathed them nothing except the promise of more material goods—a bigger car in the driveway, a hi-fi set. "With much fanfare, the fawned-over sons of the postwar generation had been handed their keys to the kingdom and for a while they reveled in their prosperity." But it wasn't enough. A generational link was broken, forcing male baby-boomers to form baboon tribes.

Everywhere she goes on her journey, Faludi encounters graying male boomers who are down in the dumps, having missed out on too many fishing trips. Malaise is tough to measure, and Faludi doesn't cite a raft of statistics to indicate how pervasive and widespread the social toll of this father-son estrangement really is. (Recent developments suggests that having a hazy dad hanging around the house is better than having no dad at all.) Instead, she treats her postwar scenario as a poetic truth—an impressionistic fact.

Impressions can differ, though. When Gloria Emerson did her own personal survey on the state of masculinity in *Some American Men* in 1985, she was struck by "the great tenderness many men, more than I thought, feel for their own fathers." She wrote: "Stuffed as we are with our daily rations of psychoanalysis-publico, it is not a revelation how the harsh father

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damages the male child. What is not so apparent is how the father who loves his son and makes it known, even in the sorriest circumstances, lifts the child to a privileged order from which he can never be expelled." It certainly isn't apparent to Faludi. Perhaps the situation between fathers and sons has worsened since 1985, for Faludi meets mostly grievance and regret. She keeps bumping up against a frustrating wall of silence between fathers and sons, a dead dial tone. "Men spoke to me of waiting, year after year, for a sign, a late-night confidence, a death-bed confession, even—desperately—a letter delivered posthumously, for any moment that would decode the mystery of their mute fathers." At least Hamlet had his father's ghost to put him wise.

THE OTHER BROKEN link is the bond between working men. For generations, men forged their identities through industrial labor, taking pride in what they could do with their hands and muscles and engineering know-how. Faludi doesn't cite her nemesis Camille Paglia, but her valedictory section on the Long Beach Naval Shipyard recalls Paglia's remark that when she crosses a bridge or passes a skyscraper, she often thinks, "Men made this." But such men are now an endangered species, a lunchpail line of Willy Lomans.

Plant closings, cheap imports, defense downsizing, information technology, and entrepreneurial success stories (to which whole magazines such as *Fast Company* and *Tycoon* are devoted) have consigned the ranks of blue-collar workers to the dinosaur pit of economic progress, tarnishing the survivors' pride in craft and making them feel alienated, alone. Like many on the left (and some on the right) with a political investment in downgrading America as a land of disenchantment and former glory, Faludi stresses only the bust side of the boom-and-bust cycle, treating the economic expansion of the 1990s first as if it didn't exist, then as if it didn't fundamentally matter ("as the economy recovered, the male crisis did not, and it became apparent that whatever men's afflictions were, they could not be gauged solely through graphs from the Bureau of Labor Statistics"). She mourns the derelict sites of the pre-post-industrial economy as if they were the bare ruined choirs of a broken faith. Instead of an apprentice studying under a union elder, instead of camaraderie among coworkers, it's now every Dilbert for himself; and building a website (wowee!) doesn't bolster the spirit or ennoble the physical landscape.

The book's official mourner of the passing of industrial might is, of all people, Sylvester Stallone. He serves as Faludi's guide to American manhood, her faithful Tonto. In a chauffered car from the set of *Cop Land*, an ensemble film with which the star hopes to win some acting respect from his peers, Stallone, tired of flexing his oiled muscles and being treated like meat, rides pensively, "consumed with his chances of rejoining a meaningful workaday world." For *Cop Land*, of course, Stallone put on weight and walked with a limp, thereby fulfilling Faludi's mental image of the American man as a puffy, hobbled soul-searcher. As the sedan nears the George Washington Bridge, he points to its iron majesty and remarks (weirdly like Paglia): "See that? The incredibly detailed work that went into it? That's *work*. That's when men had a real craft, when they really built something. Imagine looking out and seeing this and thinking, 'I *did* that.'"

Elsewhere in her book, Faludi devotes an exhaustive chapter to the genesis of the "Rambo" mystique, examining the scripts as if they were variant texts of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and diagnosing the films' true subtext as the conflict that Stallone had with his father, an Oedipal struggle that she cites as symptomatic: "Offscreen and on the political stage, the male electorate was having as hard a time reconstructing the public father as Sylvester Stallone had deconstructing his private one." As Sly goes, so goes the nation.

Stallone cuts an almost surrealistic figure as the model of masculinity in *Stiffed*, a barbecued ham given to soul-searching pronouncements that he seems to sense Faludi wants to hear. His exaggerated image provides the right cartoon billboard for Faludi's exaggerated fears. As the screenwriter Stirling Stilliphant observed so eloquently in an interview in *Backstory 3*, "Stallone has one talent—that is to have soaked up all the bullshit which has accumulated in La La Land over the years, coated it with an ersatz patina of culture and fine art, and created from his bootstraps a genuine, authentic Monster." (Then Silliphant added, "In person he can be, I understand, a warm and delightful friend.") A high-priced victim of voyeurism, Stallone is living proof to Faludi that no mere mortal man can bear up under the body armor of "ornamental culture." If Rocky/Rambo, licking his wounds like Achilles at a banquette at Spago, feels listless, deflated, and unfulfilled—"'I'm surprised they even gave me this booth,' Stallone said, only half-joking. 'I'm like driftwood in here'"—what hope can there be for your average loser?

According to *Stiffed*, futile exhibitionism is man's lot in the 1990s. The Cleveland Browns fans in the Dawg Pound, the initiator of a Waco documentary who finds himself shunted aside at the Academy Awards, the sexual predators of the Spur Posse who become tabloid-TV bad boys for a brief spell ("'Maury Povich, he *lied* to us,' Chris Albert shouted, kicking hard at the leg of the blackjack table"), a former gangbanger and confessed killer named Monster Kody who publishes a bestselling book about his exploits only to end up back in the slammer ("'Did you see me on ESPN?' I hated to tell him I hadn't; I knew he'd be disappointed")—nearly all of Faludi's subjects are bobbing heads competing for camera attention because they didn't get enough nurturing from dear old clueless dad.

"For a generation of men who had to pursue their destinies in a Planet Hollywood world [Stallone being one of Planet Hollywood's original backers]," Faludi writes, "the journey often seemed almost an extension of that old TV series *Route 66*. Like that show's protagonists, they, too, often felt like orphans turning endlessly off some open road, pulling into unfamiliar towns, looking for fathers they could not find... All that was left was the road which, like the actual Route 66, seemed to end, literally for some, metaphorically for many more, in Hollywood." And Route 66 leads Faludi metaphorically if not literally to the Ventura Freeway, which in turn takes her to Van Nuys Boulevard in San Fernando Valley—the heart of the American porn industry, its Bizarro Hollywood.

HERE FALUDI EXAMINES a naked colony of unaffiliated males in their Naugahyde habitat. First excerpted in *The New Yorker*, "Waiting for Wood" is meant to be the knockout chapter of *Stiffed*, the crescendo of all of Faludi's themes, an electrical shocker. Instead, it is a study in how a journalist can get the particulars right and the overall picture dead wrong.

Like so many reporters investigating the skin trade, Faludi hangs around a porn set to soak up the cheesy atmosphere and tell us how tedious it all is. ("After several clockwork transitions and an endless anal scene....") She pays the inevitable visit to the World Modeling Talent Agency, which may look like a roach motel for porn rookies, but don't be fooled: "It is a backstage door to the current American dream and an emergency escape hatch for some who find themselves capsizing in a reconfiguring American economy." (It is difficult to resist quoting Faludi's sentences. They are so awful.)

The World Modeling Talent Agency is where the ornamental culture gets downright nasty. As aspiring starlets stack up in the waiting room like runway jets for a "talent call," a former Chippendales

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dancer who calls himself Damon Rose tries to pester his way into being seen by the production scouts, only to be ejected. "Damon Rose slunk out shamefaced, flung back into the masses in the main room, where I spotted him busy converting hurt to aggression. He had sneaked up behind an actress and grabbed her breasts. She shook him off, then turned to appraise his pectorals. 'Your boobs are bigger than mine,' she said. He laughed uncertainly, then wandered off, his face sunk in despair." What a dork.

For Faludi, however, Damon Rose is another sideswipe victim of the porn world's power-shift towards women, whose improved status has come at men's expense. Like the shipbuilders and the dockworkers whom she memorializes, male porn performers have been deprived of an opportunity to ply a decent trade. They are humping on screen because of the new economy. "They had all bailed out of sinking occupational worlds that used to confer upon working men a measure of dignity and a masculine mantle but now offer only uncertainty." Having nowhere to ply a trade with traditional tools, they are forced to grab hold of their own faucet for income and validation.

PAID LESS THAN their female counterparts, under constant pressure to perform, male porn performers are the ultimate freelancers in the brutal capitalist jungle. The spotlight of "display culture" burns hotter on them, reducing some to a crisp. The martyr in Faludi's morality tale is Cal Jammer, a porn actor who suffered from wobbly wood on the set (or in Faludi-speak, "Much to his frustration, he often found his erections held hostage to his feelings"), was taunted by catty crewmembers, and finally shot himself on the front lawn of his estranged wife, a stripper turned porn actress whom nobody seems to like.

When Elvis Presley died, cynics said, "Good career move." It wasn't for Jammer. His posthumous career went nowhere. Faludi notes that after the suicide of a female porn star named Savannah, who killed herself after a car accident which left her disfigured, the porn biz rushed out compilation tapes and phony tributes to cash in. But poor Jammer's suicide failed to attract any money-grubbing vultures; and this is conclusive evidence, writes Faludi, that "women were more marketable, even in death."

Here, as in much of her book, Faludi is letting her thesis do her thinking for her. Jammer faded from the porn shelves not because he was a man in a woman's realm but because, unlike Savannah, he was a utility player, not a star. If Jammer had been as famous as John C. Holmes, one of the first major porn stars to die of AIDS, he might have gotten the same tacky sendoff. (Holmes, a.k.a. "Johnny Wadd" and "the human tripod," was the model for "Dirk Diggler" in *Boogie Nights* and is the subject of a documentary recently shown at the Toronto Film Festival.)

Faludi falls for the hype that because women are more visible in adult video, they are the ones in control. (She quotes a producer who complains about porn being infected by "the feminization of Hollywood.") It is a distinctly odd notion, that porn is an expression of female power. Yes, porn actresses are glossy "cover-box girls" who develop their own fanclub followings, but the turnover in porn starlets is rapid and brutal, while men in the business—such as Randy West, Peter North, Ron Jeremy, Ed Powers, even a grizzled geezer like Jamie Gillis—not only continue working long past their first paunch and prostate problem, but also front their own lines of tapes where they "break in" new girls to the business. Still others, such as John Leslie and Paul Thomas, hang up their socks and graduate to the director's chair where, through the prudent use of dry ice and flashbacks, they become "auteurs." When it comes to the men, old porn stars never die, they just chip away.

As for the younger bucks, two of the most prominent male stars today are Rocco Siffredi, a sexual swashbuckler who presides over a series of Eurotrash-orgy tapes with titles such as *Never Say Never to Rocco Siffredi* and *Rocco: Animal Trainer*, and has reached such notoriety that he recently appeared in the very explicit art film *Romance*; and Max Hardcore, who dresses up porn actresses in Lolita outfits before he manhandles them. The mistreatment of women in Siffredi's and Hardcore's tapes is so raw, gagging, and physically intrusive that even the seen-it-alls in the porn world have expressed qualms.

The upscale erotica ("X-rated versions of Victoria's Secret ads") that may have prevailed when Faludi was visiting the San Fernando Valley has been overturned by a much meaner variety. Moreover, the introduction of Viagra into the porn scene has removed most of the existential angst of "waiting for wood" that Faludi charges with such significance. On many porn shoots today the problem isn't getting it up, the problem is getting it down so that everyone can go home. Some male performers have turned into battering rams, wearing the poor women out. No, in porn, cock remains king.

Far from mirroring the moribund status of men, the current porn scene crudely reflects the resurgence of male bravado and male prerogative in popular culture.

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Aside from a few pockets of girl power (typified by "Buffy the Vampire Slayer"), pop culture in the 1990s bears the condom ring of guy humor and horniness, as evidenced by Howard Stern and his imitators, "Beavis & Butt-Head," "South Park," "The Man Show," "Shasta McNasty," *Maxim* magazine (whose success has turned other men's magazines into bimbo eruptions), the dopey adolescent stardom of Adam Sandler, the locker-roomish slapstick antics of the Farrelly brothers, the needling misogyny of Neil LaBute, the playboy presidential bid of Donald Trump, the bruises worn as medals in *Fight Club*, much of hip-hop music, and the rebirth of professional wrestling as a postmodern Götterdämmerung. Immature and cartoonish as most of these items are, their popularity and their attack-energy signify that millions of young men no longer feel hemmed in or inhibited by feminism. They know that they can joke their way around it.

FALUDI IS NOT unaware of this bantam strut of hormones—she refers to "amped-up virility," and in a recent issue of *Newsweek* she touts *Fight Club* as "an incisive gender drama" for sensitive brutes—but she chalks it up to over-compensation for basic insecurity. "As successful manhood increasingly got measured in how much you were viewed, many men sought to draw the gaze in ways that didn't leave them feeling 'emasculated,' that made them feel they had captured the spotlight rather than succumbed to it. As [Michiko] Kakutani noted, when a market-research firm polled teenage boys on their aspirations, they rated 'being funny as the personality trait they value most and being athletic as their most prized skill.' These young men understood that the wisecracking stand-up comedian and the muscle-bound sports star were the most watched and thus most highly valued male objects of their time." What Faludi doesn't understand about boys or men is that being funny has *always* been prized, not because it makes a guy stand out, but because it helps him fit in.

Humor makes someone popular, a part of the gang, not an object on a pedestal. But reading *Stiffed*, you would get the idea that men never crack jokes, except to cover up their anguish. You would also come away with the sense that popular culture doesn't convey rebel energy and pent-up desires; that it is solely an instrument of social control and indoctrination. The men in *Stiffed* are like the masses in so much leftist literature of the 1930s: a poor herd always on the receiving end. Unable to find a proletariat in the present, Faludi has to import a proletariat from the past to accommodate men as a victim class.

Faludi has an atavistic leftwing nostalgia for the good old bad days when it was workers versus bosses, and the picket lines were drawn, and the only question was, Which side are you on? Now everything is muddier, and well-meaning personal gestures substitute for organizing. Just as Bruce Springsteen makes a political fashion statement by dressing like a railroad worker on stage to show his kinship to Woody Guthrie, Faludi, figuratively speaking, garbs the men in *Stiffed* in old dungarees and work shirts—ideological hand-me-downs from John Steinbeck, James T. Farrell, and Studs Terkel. Men are now a spiritual proletariat, an underclass and overclass of depressed Okies, worse off than their political sisters because they are too out of touch with their feelings to articulate their rage.

"As I traveled through this new landscape of masculinity," Faludi writes, "I was struck by how many men I encountered had the feeling that something or someone had stripped them of their usefulness and stranded them on a new decorative planet." After six years of interviewing sad sacks, Faludi scratches her head over this epidemic of male passivity. "My travels led me to a final question: Why don't contemporary men rise up in protest against their betrayal? If they have experienced so many of the same injuries as women, the same humiliations, why don't they challenge the culture as women did? Why can't men seem to act?" Actually, that's three final questions, and it leads to another rash of inquiry as Faludi concedes that men lack a clearly defined foe and battlefield.

> What new realms should they be gaining—the media, entertainment, and image-making institutions of corporate America? But these are institutions, they are told, that are already run by men; how can men invade their own territory? Is technological progress the frontier? Why then does it seem to be pushing men into obsolescence, socially and occupationally? What kind of frontier conquers the American man instead of vice versa? Is technology not the frontier but the enemy? But if the American man crushes the machine, whose machine has he vanquished?

Not waving but drowning in her own swirl, Faludi manages to offer the prospect of men joining with like-minded women to create "a new paradigm for human progress." Of course, it is always easier to isolate problems than to propose workable solutions, but what a dinky pop-fly. Six-hundred-plus pages purporting to show that men are expiring of slow suicide, and her prescription is "a new paradigm," a phrase with which Tony Blair probably brushes his teeth.

And the suggestion that the key to men's future well-being is to follow a feminist lead? Men will never do that—out of idiot pride, if nothing else. Robert Bly is right: men have to address their own messes. Perhaps the reason that Faludi is so fuzzy when it comes to practical agitation (the term is John Jay Chapman's) is because she is essentially a moralist using pop sociology to trick out her own misgivings into trend lines that indicate a more widespread slump. When Faludi obsesses about ornamental culture, for example, it is clear that she has spent too much time in the sunglass glare of Los Angeles, where she lives. Like many cultural declinists, she practices a politics of piety, which is not politics at all, only a high-minded handwringing.

SHE GOT BY with it once. The difference between *Backlash* and *Stiffed* is that the alarm bells in the first book did capture something in the air, a complicated tension between men and women in the workplace that exploded in the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas battle. But nothing in *Stiffed* rings true. The book is a series of muffled notes, and not just because so much of the material has dated so quickly. (Now that Cleveland has regained a football franchise, the cruel jilting of the Browns' "Dawg Pound" contingent—which Faludi uses as a textbook example of how the average fan gets shafted by luxury-skybox owners who care more about the bottom line—has turned out to be a temporary separation, not a tragic parting. One prominent member of the "Dawg Pound" is currently doing a victory dance in Wal-Mart ads to promote Direct TV.)

The shock of recognition is what's missing. I am a boomer, the oldest of four brothers, and my father served in Korea; but when Faludi writes of "fawned-over sons" being handed "the keys to the kingdom," I can only wonder, What keys? What kingdom? Dad must have been holding out on us; and the other dads, too. Nobody with whom I grew up had the lofty sense of entitlement that Faludi eulogizes as having ended in ashes and stale beer. For all its invocation of the common man, Faludi's book carries a severe college-educated upper-middle-class slant.

Also, I don't know any man who feels that he is on pantyhose display in a world that he never made (and I work for Condé Nast, which *Stiffed* paints as a wading pool of narcissism). What men my age brood about is probably what men our age have always brooded about: waning

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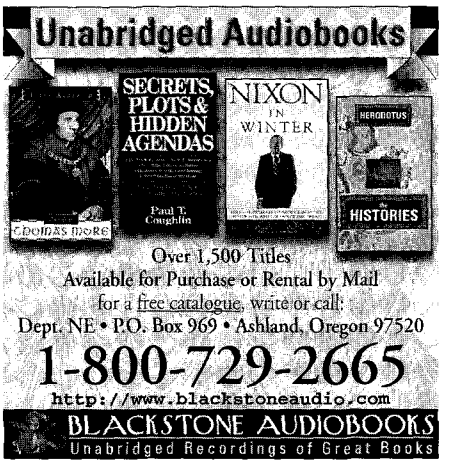
powers, inklings of mortality, feeling past-it. For most men, these blues are something you go through and eventually get over; but in Faludi's America, that tornado alley of backlashes, betrayals, undeclared wars, and domestic apocalypses, the quiet struggles of maturity don't make for gripping allegory.

A Haunting Postscript. At the end of Faludi's journey came another journey, a shorter one, yet one fraught with its own perils. I mean her book tour. "I've just finished writing a book on the cultural crisis besetting men," she informed the readers of *Harper's Bazaar* in October. "It comes out in the fall, and I've been bracing myself for the plunge into the cauldron of ignorance and clichés." In the article she mentions her boyfriend, a writer named Russ Rymer. On one stop of this hell tour, Faludi was interviewed by the *New York Post* while Rymer ran interference ("'You have a radio interview in 20 minutes,' he reminds her gently"). "Russ lived the birthing of this book," she told the reporter after Russ excused himself. "As she talks, she dreamily studies the cover of *Stiffed*—which features a picture of a handsome construction worker from the 1940s. 'Don't you think the guy on the cover looks a little like Russ?' she asks."

If the personal is the political, then perhaps Susan Faludi went marshmallow on men in *Stiffed* not because of feminist outreach, but because she found herself a nice fella, someone to look after her. The working-class hero on the cover of her book is actually her own Prince Charming in disguise. Her girlfriends must be *so* jealous. ■



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By HELEN VENDLER

The Oxford Book of English Verse edited by Christopher Ricks

(Oxford University Press, 690 pp., $39.95)

Lives of the Poets by Michael Schmidt

(Knopf, 975 pp., $30)

WHAT IS THIS roll-call of melancholy names: "A.E.," Hew Ainslie, Mark Akenside, Henry Alford, Thomas Ashe, Robert Ayton, Joanna Baillie, Grisel Baillie, Frances Bannerman, Anna Barbauld, John Barbour, James Beattie, Wilfrid Blunt, William Bowles, Alexander Brome, William Broome, Thomas Brown, John Sheffield (a.k.a. the Duke of Buckinghamshire), Jeremiah Callanan, William Cartwright, Hartley Coleridge, Sara Coleridge, Henry Constable, Robert Cunninghame-Graham, and John Cutts? They are merely the A's, B's, and C's among the poets deleted by Helen Gardner in 1972 from *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, as she revised the original anthology that was edited by Arthur Quiller-Couch in 1900. And what is this later rollcall: Richard Barnfield, Francis Beaumont, John Beaumont, Laurence Binyon, Nicholas Breton, William Browne, John Byrom, Thomas Campbell, Henry Carey, Thomas Chatterton, G.K. Chesterton, Henry Chettle, John Cleveland, William Cornish, and William Cory? Those are the A-B-C poets deleted by Christopher Ricks in his revision of Helen Gardner.

Does anybody miss these people? Probably not. This is merely the trimming of the anthology pie-crust: a smidgen lost here or there is of no consequence. Individual readers may feel the occasional pang: I don't miss most of Gardner's deletions from Quiller-Couch, but I do mildly mind the disappearance of several poets from Ricks's anthology, among them Chatterton (so important to Keats), Macaulay (for the *Lays of Ancient Rome*, also unrepresented by Gardner), and Spender and Day-Lewis (for the moments of my youthful reading that they represent).

Still, I am glad to have most of the new poets Ricks has put in: not only the contemporaries, from Donald Davie to Sea-

HELEN VENDLER is the author, most recently, of *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Harvard University Press) and *Seamus Heaney* (Harvard University Press).

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mus Heaney, but many Scottish poets (from Gavin Douglas to Hugh MacDiarmid) that give a whole new tone to the notion of "English" verse. Devolution has made its mark, though one sees more of Scotland here than of Ireland or Wales. Ricks, I am pleased to see, has included no weak poems as concessions to "diversity"; the poems in his *Oxford Book of English Verse* are almost uniformly worth reading, and the ones that fall below the usual level are included for a reason (for example, "Twinkle, twinkle, little star").

YET IT IS not by adding or subtracting a few minor names from a previous edition that an anthology defines itself. It defines itself principally by what it does to the major poets. Ricks, like Gardner, includes all the big names of the last 600 years: Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and so on, down to Hardy and Yeats. The canon, it seems, is still the canon. For various reasons, Ricks offers shorter selections from many poets than Gardner: her book ran to 974 pages, his to 609; he includes dramatic verse; and he covers fifty more years than she did. Still, when one compares allotted numbers of lines, sharp differences begin to appear which are not proportional to the relative sizes of the anthologies. Gardner offers over 1000 lines of Spenser, Ricks 350. Gardner offers 500 lines of Yeats, Ricks 200 (I round off the numbers). Gardner offers 550 of Hardy, Ricks 260.

These condensations are not driven merely by restrictions of space; they are also driven by taste. Gardner had a taste for the high and the holy. Ricks is more skeptical and more wide-ranging. He has a better sense of humor and he includes more light verse. But he also exhibits, it seems to me, a peculiarity of judgment with respect to some poets and some poems. The wrenching of former esteem is acutely felt here, especially in the matter of individual poems.

It is hard to believe that "The Waste Land" does not appear in Ricks's volume, but it does not, except for a single brief eight-line excerpt ("Phlebas the Phoenician"). The thirteen pages of Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market" take up, one could say, the pages that "The Waste Land" might have occupied. I myself would rather have had "The Waste Land"; and it is even possible that Ricks himself might rather have had "The Waste Land," had other editorial considerations not made themselves felt (the desirability of including good poems by women, allowing Christina Rossetti her most famous poem; the representation of Victorian Gothic; and so on). But editorial choice reads like a declaration of taste: "I consider 'Goblin Market' a good poem, and 'The Waste Land' an inferior poem," or so Ricks might seem to be saying.

Ricks does not discuss his criteria of choice, of poets or of poems, in either his preface or his introduction. The preface discusses his editorial decisions (using original spelling, for instance, in preference to modernizing the spelling of older authors). The introduction, citing previous critics from Ben Jonson to T. S. Eliot, offers some valuable obiter dicta on poetry over the centuries. Any anthologist knows the conflicting pressures affecting an editor's choices; but I wish Ricks had written a polemical introduction defending the more startling of his revisions of the canon. Ricks does offer aesthetic reasons for not including poetry of the Commonwealth countries, of Canada, Australia, and the rest, saying that "I judged reluctantly that pre-independence poetry had not achieved poetic independence (freedom from diluted fashion), had not given to the world such poetic accomplishments as would constitute a claim to the pages of an anthology of the best in English poetry."

IF THIS, THEN, is an anthology of "the best in English poetry" we must judge that the significant poems omitted—from Spenser's "Epithalamion" to "The Lamb," "Easter 1916," and "The Waste Land"—do not, for Ricks, lie in the category of "the best in English poetry." I, for one, am dying to know why. There may be something in the characters of Eliot and Yeats—to speak only of modern examples—that Ricks finds repellent. In his introduction, Ricks comes close to saying that good poetry is the product of good character and good conscience:

> For Jonson, it was imperative to hold to an ancient faith: the impossibility of anyone's being a good poet without first being a good man or a good woman. The sceptic in us may rightly remember the daily lives of the poets, their vanities and envies and irritabilities, and so be puzzled by Jonson's confidence. Yet does not some such truth hold? Realized in the very words of a true poem, there has to be a new sensitivity to consciousness and to conscience, and where could this come from but somewhere good?

To the extent that one cannot find evidence of that "somewhere good" in a poet, one might doubt that he could produce "a new sensitivity to consciousness and to conscience." Myself, I think that the chief obligation of a writer is to hatch himself in style, to become one of the few distinct voices of his century. A virtuous character is desirable, but it is not necessary, for posthumous literary life.

In the case of Yeats, we have some evidence of Ricks's judgment of the writer's character. In a response to the *Observer*'s recent query, "Which are the most overrated authors of the past 1000 years?" Ricks answered, "Yeats." I quote him in full:

> Genius, granted, so how can it make sense to find Yeats transcendently overrated? Because his thrilling chilling gift was for rhetoric only. Not poetry, despite the long-standing ovation of flim-flam and flummery. The good fairy blessed his tongue. The bad fairy put hers out and cursed the rest of him. Lifelong he strove in verse in vain: to believe something, to care about someone, to form and to carry a conviction. Oh to arrive at some revelatory relation—at once new and true—between words *and all else*. But again and again he settled for a trick of the voice, that damagingly inviolable voice of his. For words alone were certain good. Easy now. Toying with Pope's poignant line ("They shift the moving toyshop of their heart"), he orotunded and melodramatised it: "In the foul rag and bone shop of the heart." "Foul" is the familiar Yeatsian overdoing, a pretence at a pang, letting us and himself off with a ripe frisson. Your ordinary rag and bone shop, undressed, would have been a much more taxing sight and smell.
> A voice sans heart, and so never—well, hardly ever—the true voice of feeling.

This must have been fun to write: thrilling and chilling, fairies and flummery, flim-flam and foulness. Ricks is always zestful, and always ready to be candid. But what are we to do with his statement if we do not think of Yeats as a rhetorical poseur engaged in heartless compromise? Setting the cat among the pigeons is exhilarating for a critic, and Ricks could have fluttered many more dovecotes in his introduction to this anthology, had he cared to. It would have made vivid and controversial reading.

AS ONE WHO has contributed to "the long-standing ovation" of Yeats, I understand something of what underlies Ricks's objection to him. Yeats is certainly not given to understatement. But then neither is Milton, so it cannot be just the orotundity alone that puts Ricks off; for "Milton's grand style" is one of his interests. Nor can it be the word "foul" alone, since it is from Shakespeare that Yeats borrows it here, alluding (as he does elsewhere, via Crazy Jane) to the chant of the witches in *Macbeth*, "Fair is foul and foul is fair." Finding himself entangled in the idealization by which the heart enhances its love-object, Yeats

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makes common cause with Shakespeare in sonnet 147: "For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright / Who art as dark as hell, as black as night." The Yeatsian heart has made an unrealistic idol of "a rag, a bone, and a hank of hair" (as Kipling put it in the 1897 poem called "The Vampire" that is likely to have been one of Yeats's sources):

> A fool there was and he made his prayer
> (Even as you and I!)
> To a rag and a bone and a hank of hair
> (We called her the woman who did not care)
> But the fool he called her his lady fair—
> (Even as you and I!)

And whereas the outside of the heart bears the portrait, one could say, of the idolized "lady fair," the inside contains her as the rag and bone that she humanly is. I think Yeats's "shop" is less indebted to Pope's "toyshop" than to Shakespeare's metaphor of the heart as a shop in sonnet 24: "Your true image pictured lies . . . / in my bosom's shop." The phrase "the foul rag and bone shop of the heart"—Kipling crossed with Shakespeare—doesn't seem to me to overstate the poet's wrung admission of the libidinal sources of exalted verse; but Ricks's distaste may spring in part from cultural difference—the English preference for understatement versus the more extroverted rhetoric of America and Ireland.

For Ricks, the falsest Yeats is the Irish Yeats. Not a single one of his selections from Yeats mentions Ireland or things Irish. No "Easter 1916," no "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen," no "Meditations in Time of Civil War," no "Cuchulain Comforted." The eight poems here included (seven poems, really, since one is printed in its early and late versions) are "The Sorrow of Love" (two versions), "When You are Old" (an adaptation from Ronsard), "The Second Coming," "Leda and the Swan," "Among School Children," and the two Byzantium poems. The last five are inevitable choices; but can one represent Yeats fairly while deleting his Irish subject matter?

Although it is true that Yeats did say—in a poem written in his twenties—that words alone are certain good, I do not find this to be one of his lifelong convictions. His last two poems, written on his deathbed, praise, respectively, fidelity to one's promises ("The Black Tower") and the widening of one's experience to spheres not natural to oneself: Cuchulain, who has lived a warrior's life, has to learn (in "Cuchulain Comforted") what it is to live the afterlife as a coward. These poems express values pertaining not to words alone, but also to life. Perhaps Ricks would find a false eloquence in these late poems also, but in any case the reduction of Yeats remains surprising.

SIMILARLY, WE DO not learn why Ricks doesn't like "The Waste Land" enough to include it here. Ricks has formidable authority in judging Eliot; his writings on Eliot show a minute acquaintance with, and sustained and brilliant thought about, Eliot's work. He strikes a valuable blow here for the hard-edged Eliot by including, among the lyrics, the metallic prose poem "Hysteria":

> As she laughed I was aware of becoming involved in her laughter and being part of it, until her teeth were only accidental stars with a talent for squad-drill.... I decided that if the shaking of her breasts could be stopped, some of the fragments of the afternoon might be collected, and I concentrated my attention with careful subtlety to this end.

Yet the Eliot of "Hysteria" is certainly not the greatest Eliot.

Perhaps, in quietly deleting the best-known modernist poem, Ricks simply wants to wrest the concept of modernism away from the definitions of it derived almost exclusively from "The Waste Land." In implicitly defining English modernism, Ricks traces a line from Edward Thomas (ten poems to Yeats's seven) through the war poets (Gurney, Rosenberg, Graves) to MacDiarmid, Auden, Beckett, Empson (seven poems), and Larkin (ten poems). By his substantial choices from these poets, Ricks implies the existence of a modernist tradition that does not take its definition solely from the Yeats-Pound-Eliot axis. It is an English modernism rather than an Irish/American modernism that Ricks espouses—less estranged from England than Yeats, less European than Eliot, less bumptious than Pound.

Ricks has an unmatched range of knowledge about English poetry, and has been a brilliant editor of the poems of Tennyson. Although it may be the character (as he interprets it) of Yeats and Eliot that makes him reluctant to include in these pages some of their best-known poetry, it can hardly be Tennyson's character that leads Ricks to prefer "Come into the garden, Maud," all 74 lines of it, over *In Memoriam*, which is allotted only 32 lines. Of course, the lyric from *Maud* is famous, has been set to music, and represents Tennyson at "monodrama"; but I regret the absence of the wilder shores of *In Memoriam* when I read

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> Come hither, the dances are done,

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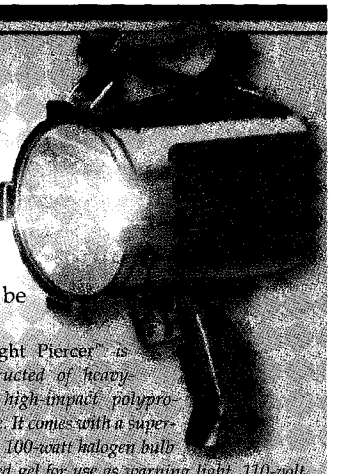

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In gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls,
Queen lily and rose in one;
Shine out, little head, sunning over with curls,
To the flowers, and be their sun.

On the other hand, one is glad to see Ricks adding wonderful poems—such as Donne's "Elegy: To his Mistris Going to Bed" and Hopkins's "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves"—that were not included by Gardner, even as one misses "Batter my heart, three-person'd God" or "Spring and Fall: To a Young Child" ("Margaret, are you grieving").

I AM SYMPATHETIC to Ricks's keeping of the original spelling in this edition, because many poetic effects depend upon it. Yet I pity the poor reader encountering in these pages the *Aeneid* as Gavin Douglas has rendered it, with its description of Charon, the ferryman of the Styx:

Thir riveris and thir watteris kepit war
By ane Charon, a grislie ferriar,
Terrible of schap, and sluggert of array:
Apon his chin feill cannos haris gray,
Lyart feltat tatis; with birnand ene reid,
Like tua fire blesis fixit in his heid.

Ricks glosses some of this, but phrases that he doesn't gloss ("sluggert of array") might puzzle even an experienced reader. Even in later poems, such as those of Burns, the original spelling may lead some younger readers astray:

John Anderson my jo, John,
When we were first acquent;
Your locks were like the raven,
Your bony brow was brent.

Though Ricks glosses "bony" as "handsome," the reader who does not glance to the bottom of the page will think that the brow is bony, not bonny. And a page earlier "bony" is not glossed: "There's not a bony bird that sings, / But minds me o' my Jean." Bony Scottish birds, rather like Stevens's angular blackbirds, flutter spectrally round such lines. Still, Ricks is right to argue that language is too important to poetry to be spruced up by the anthologist, and he remarks even more cogently that it does no harm to a reader of poetry to be slowed down (even if by spelling) as he goes.

In including dramatic verse, Ricks is bound by the restrictions of space to offer mostly the old (and still stunning) favorites. In the case of Shakespeare, these range from Richard II's "Now is the winter of our discontent" to Prospero's "Our revels now are ended," taking in, on the way, other such passages, from "To be or not to be" to Enobarbus describing Cleopatra's barge. It is true, as Ricks insists, that we delete an important part of the history of English poetry when we overlook such complex interventions as Shakespeare's blank verse (not to speak of the dramatic verse of Marlowe, Jonson, and Webster). In the past, one could scarcely finish school without having read many of the soliloquies of Shakespeare; but now it is entirely possible that someone will encounter them first in this anthology. And whatever one's quarrels with an anthologist's selection, it remains true that anthologies are the route by which young people find poets, and that this one is full of good introductions to good poets. Perhaps the ardent young will find the missing poems by themselves.

MICHAEL SCHMIDT BEGINS *Lives of the Poets* with a preemptive strike against the academics (dull and pedantic, one and all) who might review it:

Specialists read from a specialism, finding a way through to what they know they'll find. Say they're philologists, literary historians or theorists. They have an agenda, poems slot into it. If *we* stumble across poems they've pinned like butterflies to an argument and try to unpin them so they can fly again, or die, they dismiss us as unlicensed. I prefer to be unlicensed.

Well, as we know, there are no licensing bodies as such for writing about poetry. Born in Mexico, Michael Schmidt was educated in the United States and came in the 1960's to England, where he has made his mark as the founder and editor of *PN Review* and as the founder and director of Carcanet Press, which has published a notable series of poets from England and elsewhere; and he is a poet himself. Could it not be argued that the editor of a powerful journal, by accepting some writings and rejecting others, is licensing poetry and conducting an argument as surely as any academic, if more obliquely?

And indeed, Schmidt's taste—powerfully formed by such precursors as David Jones, C. H. Sisson, and Donald Davie—is on view throughout this book, as he describes, in chronological order, poet after poet. Naturally, his taste is most vehemently on view when he arrives at twentieth-century authors. (He begins with the fourteenth century.) When Schmidt is impatient, he descends to *ad hominem* (or *ad feminam*) derision. Commenting on a reading by Allen Ginsberg, for instance, he describes not the poems read, but hair and sweat:

Apart from the congregation's suspension of intelligence during those performance events, I most remember the homespun textures, the voluminous hair and the smells—smoke of several varieties, sweat, scents.

Nor is Ginsberg's character spared:

He signed the papers to have his mother lobotomized, supported authoritarian individuals and regimes as long as they were ranged against his primary foe, the United States, was ungenerous to fellow poets if they were not of his camp and promoted himself at the expense of those around him, even after he had shaved off his beard and assumed the quiet demeanor of an almost dapper professor.

Surely such a superficial interpretation of harrowing life-events (such as how to make life more bearable for a much-loved mother whose insanity was violent) is no help to a reader seeking to understand a human soul.

Schmidt might have seen Ginsberg's anguished patriotism underneath every reproach to the politicians of his country, rather than have interpreted Ginsberg's country as his "primary foe." But when Schmidt dislikes the author under scrutiny, no quarter is given. One looks in vain for comparable remarks about, say, the drunkenness and infidelities of Philip Larkin, his cruelties and malice. Instead, we find piety with respect to his "bleak truths." Of course, Ginsberg has bleak truths to tell too, mostly about American sexual and political hypocrisy; but they don't register as truths to Schmidt.

SCHMIDT WRITES *de haut en bas* of poets with troubled lives: "Self-indulgence has a place in every poet's work, but in Berryman's too prominent a place. It is the candor of Hoccleve, mournful and helpless, saying me, me, me." If we glance back at Schmidt's account of the melancholy medieval clerk Hoccleve, we read: "His candor is excessive: he lays himself open without a sense of irony." Schmidt's comparison with Berryman is rendered, in consequence, baffling: nobody had more irony toward himself than Berryman, inventing his alter ego Henry as the comic butt of that irony.

Schmidt is given to such flat-out judgments, and they mar his book. They extend not merely to the poet under discussion; they range also to generalizations about all poets. "When poets get together," Schmidt pronounces, "money and sex are what they tend to talk about." Of course, money and sex are things that tavern-goers and sorority-members also talk about. Is Schmidt trying to assert that

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Incitement to Violence

Do the Palestinians Live up to Their Oslo Commitments?

In the so-called "Oslo Agreement", often called the "peace process", Israel undertook unilaterally to make valuable concessions to the Palestinians, concessions that would eventually enable them to form an autonomous entity and to be masters of their own destiny. Never in the recorded history of mankind has any state made such concessions to one of its resident minorities. Israel requested and was solemnly promised very little in return—primarily that the Palestinians would abstain from violence and from incitement to violence.

What are the facts?

The reality, regrettably, has not at all lived up to the agreement and to the promises made. While Arafat and other Palestinian leaders proclaim their peaceful intentions in English before Western audiences, they are brutally frank when they address their own people in Arabic and away from Western newspeople and television cameras. There is constant incitement to violence and frank declaration of the ultimate goal—firmly embedded in the never rescinded PLO Covenant—namely the destruction of the State of Israel and its replacement by "Palestine," an Arab state.

The statements that follow were made by Palestinian leaders not too long ago. They are representative of similar ones made before and since.

> "Peace will not come...until the Palestinians and the Arab nations commit themselves to full acceptance of Israel and are willing to live with it in peace."

PA Chairman Yasser Arafat ***(Palestinian Television, August 9, 1997):*** *"We must confront them, we must confront them. We must confront them in every sense of the word."*

Yasser Arafat ***(Palestinian Television, August 6, 1997):*** *"...let us commit ourselves before Allah and the Palestinian people that we shall lead the coming battle as we have led previous battles. An oath is an oath and a promise is a promise. The whole world stands by us, while they are alone. They are afraid, but we are not. We cling to the oath and the promise. The Palestinian people is faithful to its oath, the one which we swore upon the first day when the initial shot was fired and the first of our martyrs fell...We are marching together with the blessing of Allah, my brothers, we are marching together to Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem."*

Kamel Hamid, head of Fatah (a faction of the PLO) ***(At a Rally, August 10, 1997):*** *"...all means are legitimate to uproot the despicable occupation."*

Sheikh Hamed Bitawi, chairman of the Palestine Religious Scholars Association ***(July 27, 1997):*** *"That which befell the infidel nations will also occur to the State of Israel. We are certain that Allah will destroy the State of Israel either through natural disasters, such as an earthquake, or at the hands of the Moslems, or both."*

PA Mufti Ikrama Sabri ***(In a sermon at Al-Aksa Mosque, July 11, 1997):*** *"Oh Allah, destroy America for she is ruled by Zionist Jews...Allah shall take revenge on behalf of his prophet against the colonialist settlers who are sons of monkeys and pigs..."*

PA Minister for Jerusalem Affairs Feisal Husseini ***(May 18, 1997):*** *"Israel is attempting to obstruct peace...The only option remaining for us will be an alternative option...war."*

Yasser Arafat ***(Addressing a crowd in Tulkarem, April 28, 1997):*** *"I now see the walls of Jerusalem, the mosques of Jerusalem, the churches of Jerusalem. My brothers! With blood and with spirit we will redeem you, Palestine!"*

Nabil Ramlawi ***(At a session of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, Reported March 17, 1997):*** *"Israeli authorities...infected by injection 300 Palestinian children with the HIV virus during the years of the intifada."*

All of these actual verbatim quotations are only a minute fraction of the inflammatory statements with which Palestinian leaders whip up their followers to a frenzy of hatred and violence against Israel. It is totally against the letter and the spirit of the Oslo accord. But it is in line with all the other acts of defiance and non-compliance on the part of the Palestinians. For example, and most egregiously perhaps, that famous Covenant that unequivocally calls for the destruction of Israel has never been rescinded. Instead of combating terrorist activity, the Palestinian Authority (P.A.) continues to release well-known members of terrorist groups. Another blatant violation is the size and the weaponry of the so-called P.A. police force, which was fixed by Oslo at a maximum of 24,000, but which is now estimated at over 50,000 members, many of them former terrorists and equipped with smuggled advanced military weapons. It is essentially an army in waiting. How do people expect Israel to bring further "sacrifices for peace" to appease these fanatics and why, in the face of daily evidence of Palestinian intransigence and murderous hatred, should Israel even consider turning over vital strategic assets to those who are openly committed to its destruction? Peace will not come to this part of the world until the Palestinians and the Arab nations commit themselves to full acceptance of Israel and are willing to live with it in peace. And that day seems to be a long way off.

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poets are just like everyone else? If so, why say it in this way? If he wants to shock the naïve reader, what's the point? I doubt that any reader is naïve enough to think that poets discuss solely Plato and iambic trimeters.

THE CURIOUS AND belligerent tone in which Schmidt's book is written is meant, I think, to distinguish it as "one man's views," to avoid the neutral explanatory tone of the biographical encyclopedia, to assume the mantle of Samuel Johnson. But the tone works against its own aim, which is to win the general reader to the poets of the English language. Schmidt's organization of each life is also odd. Instead of beginning with the biographical facts, he opens each life with a series of generalizations about the poet or the work (sometimes adding a gratuitous slur about some other camp), and only then doubles back to give the biographical facts, after which he makes remarks on individual volumes or poems.

The initial sentences of a typical Schmidt account often produce a sort of seasickness in the reader, because the grammatical subjects lurch in such different directions. Here is a typical paragraph, the opening one on Richard Rolle:

> Another victim [of the plague] was a big-hearted anchorite who wrote verse, Richard Rolle of Hampole. "Full dear me think He has me bought with bloody hands and feet." He was a man of soul. A poet-martyr. Perhaps he translated the Psalms. It is hard to establish authentic "texts" by an author unless a number of similar manuscripts survive. Most medieval writers formed schools, their works were copied, added to and altered. Much has been assigned to Richard Rolle that may not belong to him. Why was he such a *bad* poet, with only some occasional astonishing lines?

Veering from plague-death to a quotation, from quotation to inexplicable characterization (how was Rolle a martyr, if he died of the plague?), and shifting to possible acts of translation, the passage abruptly then shifts to the authentication of manuscripts and the difficulties of verifying authorship, passing irrationally thence to one of Schmidt's madcap italics, in a summary judgment.

Other openings are no less problematic. The description of James Thomson begins by calling him "the man who momentarily reinvented pastoral and is now read primarily by scholars who prefer dust to living dirt." The entry on Dr. Johnson opens by representing him as "a natural poet born into the age of prose, condemned to develop skills that were unnatural to him and to write, at great length, in the wrong medium." (No reasons are given for this denigration of the great essays and *Rasselas*.) The first point that Schmidt makes about Alexander Pope is that he is among the first "to flatter for a living not a nobleman or monarch (though he does both) but a party. . . . He wrote even his letters for publication." There is an accusatory tone in much of this: before we have heard any comments on Pope's writing, we are given to understand that he was a flatterer and a hypocrite.

THE CLOSING REMARKS about poets are often lurid, too. Christina Rossetti, after being described in rather peculiar terms ("She is the Gwen John to Dante Gabriel's Augustus"), is last seen in a gossipy tableau: "In the weeks before her death she disturbed the neighbors each night with her unaccountable screaming." Many other people have died howling; why must we be left with this as the last life-fact about Rossetti? Basil Bunting fades from view as "a largely benign, occasionally curmudgeonly, dinosaur." (I met Bunting shortly before his death: he was a shrewd and witty conversationalist, completely unconventional, and utterly un-dinosaurlike.) There is a tabloid air in all this, as if poetry by itself cannot be interesting, or as if a life described as one devoted to poetry would be without appeal.

When Schmidt passes on to comments about particular poems, things worsen: he is vapid rather than tabloidesque. He cites some wonderful lines from Donne's "Twickenham Garden," spoken by a despairing lover who can take no joy in the garden's sensuous appeal to eyes and ears:

> Blasted with sighs, and surrounded with tears,
> Hither I come to seek the spring,
> And at mine eyes, and at my ears,
> Receive such balms, as else cure every thing;
> But O, self traitor, I do bring
> The spider love, which transubstantiates all,
> And can convert Manna to gall,
> And that this place may thoroughly be thought
> True Paradise, I have the serpent brought.

Donne's entirely familiar religious images of manna and gall, transubstantiation, Paradise, and the serpent, are tramped heavily through by Schmidt:

> What have we here? A storm-tossed wandering lover—a self-traitor, an alchemist, a god and an Adam. We have a serpent and a spider. We have various levels of experience and metaphor woven in a resonant, affective, but meaningless stanza—or meaningful to the exegete, who patiently teases out sacramental themes and recognizes the dramatic inversion of religious images in service of carnal passion.

Aside from the fact that a sentence such as "We have various levels of experience and metaphor woven in a resonant, affective ... stanza" is boilerplate suited equally to Herbert and Wordsworth, Donne and Dylan Thomas, the assertion that such a stanza is "meaningless" except to the "exegete" is preposterous. Even the young catch its dark ironies; and they certainly know that we can no longer conceive Paradise without the serpent.

NOR IS SCHMIDT better on modern verse. I cannot quote at length his incoherent remarks on Yeats (whose work he characterizes as "a Disneyland castle of halls and turrets and pinnacles and buttresses"), but here is a sample:

> As his mastery increases, his art becomes less truthful . . . . [The poem] "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory" falsifies by masking the real characters of Lionel Johnson, John Synge and George Pollexfen. He does not epitomize: he caricatures. Real persons, events and occasions are trimmed to serve his rhetorical purposes. Yet the poems speak with the authority of a truth teller. The disparity between the quality of statement and the quality of witness weakens our trust in the poet, a fact that for some readers devalues the poems.

How can one have falsity of representation and "the authority of a truth teller"? One could equally well say of Shakespeare that "he caricatures"; that "real persons . . . [e.g. kings] are trimmed to serve his rhetorical purposes." But what has that to do with poetic accuracy? We are here in the camp of those who would repudiate Keats because he mentioned Cortez instead of Balboa. Schmidt's criteria for poetic truth are appallingly literal: who, except Yeats, can possibly say what Lionel Johnson seemed like to Yeats?

Also there are errors. Hopkins did not write "Mid-numbered He mid three of the thunder throne"; nor is Bunting's copy of Shakespeare's sonnets—improved upon under Pound's direction by the removal of "superfluous words"—lost, as Schmidt says. (It is in the possession of Professor Massimo Bacigalupo, and I have a xerox of it.) But such errors are relatively unimportant in a book that stakes its all on judging the sheep and the goats. Some of

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Schmidt's judgments—such as the high value he sets on the poetry of Edgell Rickword, a poet of the World War I generation—are simply incomprehensible. Here is a comment on Rickword:

> The savage beauty of vision in "Birthday Ruminations" culminates in a stanza where man's disintegration is contrasted with the integrating world of the sea, with a diction as strange and wonderful as it is precise:
>
> The crepitation of the restless grains
> and the soft integration of fresh worlds
> and the vermiculation of the flesh,
> is the procession of the pastoral soul;
> a piscene epic, mammal tragedy.

I can see no "savage beauty" here, and I wonder if anyone else would agree with such commendation. Though it is a common complaint that a critical judgment is not borne out by the quotation that follows, when this happens too often, as it does in this book, it is the judgment of the critic that is impugned.

IT MAY SEEM to Schmidt, in criticizing his book, one of those academics who "prefer dust to living dirt"—or who prefer Ginsberg and Yeats to "piscene epic and mammal tragedy." Perhaps Schmidt's whole venture—a one-man description of all the poets from Chaucerian times to the present—was never feasible in the first place. His title alludes to Dr. Johnson's *Lives of the English Poets*, but the essays in Johnson's book were prefaces to selections of the poems themselves, so that readers could check Johnson's remarks against the actual work of the poet, something not possible in Schmidt's series of mini-biographies. Johnson's tome, which ranges from the entertaining to the judgmental, does not exploit the lives of the poets of whom he writes. His verdicts, bad and good, are grave and considered; and they respect the efforts of art.

Schmidt's capsule descriptions of poems, by contrast, risk leaving out all that is interesting about poetry. What can we learn about *Samson Agonistes* from Schmidt's remarks on the "failure" of this "intolerable" work, and from his contempt for what he calls the "simple sentiment" of its "Panglossian" conclusion? I quote his hectoring question:

> Can we believe even the simple sentiment of these Panglossian lines that close *Samson Agonistes*?
>
> All is best, though we oft doubt
> What th'unsearchable dispose
> Of highest Wisdom brings about,
> And ever best found in the close.
>
> Can *he* believe them, or only within the context of his artifact?

Who could doubt that Milton believed in the "unsearchable" ways of Providence, whether he was experiencing them in life or writing about them in art? The poet who wrote of "a Paradise within thee, happier far" understood both the moral value and the cognitive value of human suffering, and he had no doubt of the exemplary and prophetic testimony of Samson's steadfastness. At moments such as these, when Schmidt calls Milton "simple" and "Panglossian," I wonder why he has written this book at all. ■

The Evils

By JOHN LUKACS

Grand Delusion: Stalin and the German Invasion of Russia by Gabriel Gorodetsky

(Yale University Press, 408 pp., $29.95)

THE MOST CONSEQUENTIAL event of World War I was the American declaration of war against Germany. The most consequential event of World War II was the German invasion of Russia. Well before Pearl Harbor, Franklin Delano Roosevelt committed himself to oppose Hitler's Germany; indeed, the American navy was already fighting an undeclared war against German naval units in the Atlantic. Before June 22, 1941, however, Stalin's Soviet Union was not at all committed to opposing Hitler. Quite the contrary. Stalin refused to believe that Hitler would attack him, until the last moment—as a matter of fact, even for a few hours after the German armed forces had broken into Russia.

Stalin had tried everything to convince Hitler of his friendship. The Hitler-Stalin relationship between 1939 and 1941 is one of the strangest chapters—and perhaps the most interesting one—in the diplomatic, political, and personal history of this century. Some of it has been known to specialists for more than fifty years, mainly because of the Allied capture of German documents in 1945. Before the German invasion of Russia, for example, nearly two hundred German divisions were massing in Poland, pressing against the Soviet frontier. Hundreds of German planes were flying reconnaisance over the western Soviet Union. For all kinds of reasons Hitler did not conceal his plan of invading Russia. The evidence was overwhelming. Churchill tried to warn Stalin of what was coming, but in vain. Stalin made every effort to deflect Hitler's decision, in which he did not believe. Stalin thought that the German generals were preparing, at worst, something against Hitler's wishes.

Stalin's efforts were marked not only by delusion, but also by cowardice. They were manifold and abject, including gesture after gesture to Berlin, signal after signal, with the purpose of demonstrating to Hitler his loyalty to their non-aggression pact. When the German declaration of war finally burst, Stalin's ambassador to Berlin asked Ribbentrop: "Isn't there a mistake?" And the foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov said to Werner von Schulenburg, the German ambassador in Moscow: "Have we deserved this?" Von Schulenburg, an old Prussian nobleman who had tried his best to counsel Hitler against attacking Russia, but in vain, is the hero of this somber—and at times ludicrous—story. In 1944, he was executed by Himmler.

Gabriel Gorodetsky is a specialist in Soviet diplomatic history. His voluminous account essentially confirms the above summary of events. But there is more. His book, and its documentation, is exceptionally timely, because there has been, lately, a wave of revisionism about the record, mostly (though not exclusively) emanating from Germany and Austria. Of course, history is always revisionism of a kind. It must find room for the multiple jeopardy that the law eschews: historians must retry and retry again. But what matters is the purpose of the revisionists. And the purpose of the revisionists in this case, is the—partial, at best—rehabilitation of Hitler's Third Reich: to argue (and,

JOHN LUKACS is the author most recently of *A Thread of Years* (Yale) and *Five Days in London—May 1940* (Yale).

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in some instances, to "prove") that Hitler's attack on Russia in 1941 was a preventive move, because Stalin, in 1941, was preparing to invade Germany.

It began in 1977, with David Irving's *Hitler's War* (a book that John Keegan recently, and very queerly, listed as one of the most important fifty books about World War II). Citing one or two pieces of utterly fragmentary and irrelevant "evidence," Irving stated that the Soviet Union in 1941 was about to attack Germany. Ten years later a spate of more reputable German historians turned to a more subtle attempt at the rehabilitation of Hitler, advancing two arguments: first, that Communism was as bad as Nazism, and so the Holocaust was in many ways a response to the Gulag; and second, that Stalin was about to attack Germany anyhow.

The latter argument was taken up by Günther Gillessen, in the conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, and then by the Austrian Ernst Topitsch (who claimed that World War II "was essentially a Soviet attack on the Western democracies, in which Germany ... served only as a military surrogate"), and the German military historian Joachim Hoffmann, and Werner Maser (one of Hitler's biographers), and even by an American, R.C. Raack. These writers got substantial support from Suvarov, a Soviet defector; by the very dubious former secret policeman Pavel Sudoplatov, and by the Russian historian V. A. Nevezhin. The purpose of this denigration of Stalin (and there is plenty to denigrate there) has been, alas, an ingenious mitigation of Hitler—again, that the latter's invasion of Russia was but a reaction to Stalin's plan to attack him.

THE MAIN MERIT of Gorodetsky's book is his documentation that such an attribution of Stalin's motives is thoroughly false. The evidence in this book fleshes out a picture of Stalin in which he is not merely deluded by others, but also suffers from an extraordinary measure of self-deceit. The wish is the father of the thought; and, in this instance, it was Stalin's wish to trust Hitler. The psychic dimension of the Hitler-Stalin relationship is a gruesomely fascinating story. They respected—if not admired—each other throughout the war.

On June 22, 1941, the German army has broken into Russia, and the Luftwaffe is destroying half the Russian air force, and Stalin is breathing heavily, he is helpless. "Hitler surely does not know it ..." he mumbles: "If it were necessary to organize provocation, then the German generals would bomb their own cities." A few days before, when report after report showed that the German invasion was but a matter of days, if not hours, Generals Zhukov and Timoshenko asked Stalin's permission to make the most elemental defensive preparations. Stalin ordered Timoshenko not to fire at German planes flying across the frontier. He shouted at Zhukov in a rage: "Are you proposing to carry out mobilization, alert the troops now and move them to the western borders? This means war!" Stalin's slab-faced toady Molotov asked Zhukov: "Are you eager to fight the Germans?" On June 18, less than three days before the invasion, Stalin shouted at Zhukov again: "Have you come to scare us with war, or do you want a war, as you are not sufficiently decorated, or your rank is not high enough?" He ended the meeting, "If you're going to provoke the Germans on the frontier by moving troops there without our permission, then heads will roll, mark my word!" Then he slammed the door.

No more military preparations. All the warnings—there were hundreds of them, ranging from German defectors to Churchill—were disregarded. Stalin preferred Hitler to Churchill. For almost ten days after June 22, Stalin was in a stupor; and then he gathered himself and spoke to his people for the first time. But that is another story. What belongs here is the evidence from another document that disproves, incidentally, the entire thesis of revisionists and conservatives and neoconservatives about Stalin, the International Revolutionary. Two months before the German invasion, Stalin told the Bulgarian Georgi Dimitrov, the president of the Comintern: "The International was created under Marx in the expectation of an approaching international revolution. The Comintern was created by Lenin in such a period too. Today, *national* tasks for each country have top priority. Do not hold on to what was *yesterday*. Take into account exactly the new conditions which have been created." The new conditions included the necessity for Soviet friendship with Hitler's Germany. A few days later, Stalin's henchman Andrei Zhdanov warned Dimitrov that what "Stalin regards as a 'fertile ground for spies and for agents of the enemy'" is "uncritical cosmopolitanism" (meaning mostly Jews—but that, too, is another story).

GORODETSKY FOUND THIS in Dimitrov's diary, which is preserved in Bulgaria. But the bulk of his documentary evidence comes from Moscow. Their value is substantial, for more than one reason: the above-mentioned additional proofs of Stalin's cowardice, and of his nearly limitless trust in Hitler; and also the circumstances and the texts of Stalin's speech on May 5, 1941 at the military academy, when he did tell his listeners to be ready for war, if war must come—a speech that has not only been incorrectly cited but several times falsified by revisionists. There is also evidence that, contrary to the still accepted general interpretation, Hitler's Balkan campaign in April, 1941 did not really postpone or interfere with his timetable for the invasion of Russia.

Yet these Soviet documents have their limitations. Documents "make" history, but history also makes the documents: who is drafting them, and for whom, and for what purposes? Gorodetsky himself notes, on occasion, that many Soviet diplomats and agents abroad were opportunists, that they learned what Stalin wanted to hear. "By early May," Gorodetsky writes, "many intelligence reports were going all out to accommodate the Kremlin." This included the much-touted Ivan Maisky, the Soviet ambassador in London, who was afraid of Stalin: he contributed "to the self-deception which affected the Kremlin on the eve of the war." There is a good description of one of these Soviet diplomats, the Minister to Sofia, by his British colleague there: "a rather loutish creature, obviously terrified of committing himself." The Soviet ambassador to Berlin, one of Stalin's minions, began to "water down" his reports in May. Anyhow, "eventually fear of provocation drove Stalin greatly to decrease the intelligence work in Berlin."

THERE IS TROUBLE, too, with Gorodetsky's own account. Again this trouble comes from his reliance on Soviet documents. The names of dozens of important foreign diplomats of the period are hopelessly misspelled, and often unrecognizable, since Gorodetsky simply transliterated them from their Russian-Cyrillic sounds and letters into English. The most important among these figures was the excellent Swedish minister to Moscow, whose papers Gorodetsky seems to have consulted in Sweden, and yet Vilhelm Assarsson's name is misspelled throughout. Hitler's principal military adviser is written as "Alfried Jödl." Gorodetsky confuses Tsar Alexander I with Tsar Alexander II, and ambassadors with ministers. On at least two occasions he refers to significant diplomatic talks at the Quai d'Orsay or in Paris, when the French government existed not there but in Vichy. There are also considerable errors in both of the maps of the book.

Gorodetsky puts great emphasis on Soviet diplomatic maneuvers in the Balkans, but his account is often wrong about the Balkans, and includes many errors. On more than one occasion Gorodetsky contradicts himself. (On page 29, the Soviet move into two Rumanian provinces

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was "devoid of any motive for expansion"; but on page 179 we encounter "Stalin's dream of establishing a Soviet predominance in [the Balkans]." As in the case of many contradictions, neither of the two statements is correct.

One only hopes that his errors will not provide more ammunition to the revisionists. For they are not yet done. There remains their broad argument—proposed, among others, by Patrick Buchanan's recent book *A Republic, not an Empire*, and by some British revisionists, such as John Charmley—to the effect that Churchill's resolution to fight Hitler was single-minded and obsessive; that the Western Powers should have let Hitler and Stalin fight it out in 1939 or in 1941, and thereby bleed themselves to death. Only a few weeks ago William F. Buckley observed in *National Review*: "Would things have been better if Hitler had conquered Moscow? They could hardly have been worse." These men do not ask the obvious question: And what if Hitler had won? He would have been unbeatable.

REGRETTABLE, TOO, IS Gorodetsky's interpretation of British policy. He obviously prefers Sir Stafford Cripps (who, with the best of intentions, was a most ineffective British ambassador to Russia) to Churchill (who was right about Russia in 1939-1941 in most instances). Perhaps the most serious omission in Gorodetsky's work is his lack of any mention of Stalin's decisive replacement of Maxim Litvinov with Molotov in 1939, before the pact with Hitler. Gorodetsky regrets that "Churchill's voluminous history of the Second World War, with its persuasive and excessively self-centered interpretation of events, was regarded as authoritative and was frequently quoted by Soviet historians." Now read how Churchill summed up that most ominous event:

> The eminent Jew [Litvinov], the target of German antagonism, was flung aside for the time being like a broken tool, and, without being allowed a word of explanation, was bundled off the world stage to obscurity, a pittance, and police supervision. Molotov, little known outside Russia, became Commisar for Foreign Affairs, in the closest confederacy with Stalin... There was in fact only one way in which he was now likely to move. He had always been favourable to an agreement with Hitler.

That is exactly how it was.

"One should not be distracted," Gorodetsky remarks, "by the simplistic presentation of war aims in [Churchill's] memoirs as the annihilation of Nazism.... This concealed his inherently imperialist outlook." Stalin's policy, by contrast, "remained essentially one of level-headed Realpolitik." In his conclusion, Gorodetsky admiringly cites this observation by Henry Kissinger: "Richelieu or Bismarck would have had no difficulty understanding [Stalin's] strategy."

There is some truth in this, but not much. Let us contemplate the scene on April 13, 1941, at the Moscow railroad station. Hitler had just overrun Yugoslavia in a matter of days. Earlier, Stalin had made a faint gesture to a Yugoslavian government trying to resist Hitler. But he regretted his gesture, and was worried plenty. There was one good thing that happened to him: the Japanese foreign minister was in Moscow, proposing a Soviet-Japanese pact, which Stalin gladly accepted. There was a long late lunch in the Kremlin, with much drinking. The Japanese delegation was about to leave; but the departure of the Trans-Siberian Express was delayed for an hour. Suddenly Stalin himself arrived at the station—a gesture without precedent. Molotov was stumbling along behind him, visibly drunk and shouting—another gesture without precedent. Stalin was looking for the German ambassador, but he could not find him. So he marched up to the German military attaché, embraced him, and said in a loud voice: "We will remain friends with you—in any event!" He repeated this twice, for everyone to hear. The Japanese ambassador was beside himself with excitement. Such honor! He jumped up and down, screaming in Russian: "Thanks!" "Thanks!" Later, the Japanese Foreign Minister addressed Stalin as "Your Highness."

No, this was not the world of Richelieu, and not the world of Bismarck. ■

CORRESPONDENCE

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Chiang Kai-shek's defeated army escaped to Taiwan. China's territorial claim to Taiwan is flimsy on both legal and historical grounds.

JAY LOO
Lansdale, Pennsylvania

Happy and gay

TO THE EDITORS:

I enjoyed Richard Posner's review of William N. Eskridge Jr.'s book *Gaylaw* ("Ask, Tell," October 11). I take issue with his assertion, though, that "being homosexual ... is likely to continue to be disadvantageous for one's chances in life ... [because] homosexuality complicates family formation."

Stable family life is not the same as happiness. Despite the odds, many gay men and lesbians find ways to be truly happy that are different from the heterosexual norm. These paths to happiness are not inferior or inimical to heterosexuality but rather complement it and bring a fullness to society (think of the prevalence of gays and lesbians in the arts or in "helping professions"), which would be less rich without the variety of life paths we create.

The difference between tolerating and affirming homosexuality lies in understanding the precious, indispensable gifts gays and lesbians offer to society. Posner writes that "parents are reasonable not to want their children to be homosexual"—in other words, to fail to recognize and nurture those gifts, to the detriment of their children, themselves, and all of society. This may be understandable, but it is not good. In the rush to increase tolerance of homosexuality, we may actually entrench this narrow view of the purpose of social life that, ultimately, is at the root of homophobic violence. That a pro-gay commentator such as Posner can so easily lapse into this view shows how deeply entrenched it is already.

H. JAMES HARKINS
Durham, North Carolina

Package deal

TO THE EDITORS:

John B. Judis's Washington Diarist ("Ripoff 2000," October 4) shows good intent but a lack of understanding of why certain types of systems work better when manufactured as modular systems and why others may work best as integrated systems.

Modular stereo systems generally perform better than those that are integrated because you can buy the "best of breed" for each component. The components work well together because the interfaces between them are complete and well-defined and stereo component manufacturers strictly adhere to them.

Unfortunately, this is not the case with software. The interfaces between operating systems and applications are complex and not entirely understood or documented. The company that writes the operating system may therefore be the most qualified to code the applications for it because that company best understands the interface.

Judis is right that it would be nice to buy "best of breed" software in the same way we buy stereo components. The reality is that complex computer interfaces prevent this from being so simple.

MICHAEL BROCHSTEIN
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NEW YORK DIARIST

Haunted

ON A SLOWLY GENTRIFYING block of East Fourth Street in Manhattan's East Village, around the corner from the dingy old Bowery and across the street from a faux-antique Irish pub, there's a house that many people think is haunted. It is called Merchant's House, because for almost 100 years, beginning in 1835, the family of a wealthy hardware merchant named Seabury Tredwell lived there. In 1936 Merchant's House became Merchant's House Museum. If you walk by the museum this month, you will notice that black cloth hangs above the door frame, black crepe decks the front entrance, and the shutters are drawn. You may mistake the macabre decorations for an overzealous Halloween display, but, in fact, they're part of the actual mourning ceremonies that went on when the merchant died in his house in 1865—ceremonies that have been faithfully replicated by the museum staff this October and November. Anyone who ventures inside the house will find a coffin lying in the front parlor, surrounded by strongly scented flowers and chairs for mourners. The original black crepe owned by the family cloaks the paintings on the parlor walls, covering graven images while the coffin is present—a nineteenth-century custom. Tourists will walk among solemn effigies clothed in the Tredwells' well-preserved formal mourning dress—black silk capes, black bustles, veils, black-edged handkerchiefs, mourning cameos. The staff of the Merchant's House Museum have named this special installation "A 19th-Century House in Mourning."

BUT THE EXHIBIT IS NOT THE REASON people think Merchant's House is haunted. Tourists who visit the house often confide to docents that an uneasy feeling—some call it a chill, or a heaviness—creeps over them when they stand by the closet where the Tredwell girls used to dress. The girls' gaily painted imported hatboxes are still propped on a shelf; their pantalets, petticoats, and other underthings are neatly laid out for all eyes to see. The tourists ask the guides if there is a ghost at Merchant's House—and the guides usually say no. But sometimes, when visitors get their film developed, they find a long, wide, translucent streak of white slashing through their pictures. When this happens, they send copies to the museum staff, as if to say, "So there!" The most recent visitor to do this was a bridesmaid who attended a wedding in the elegant old house this June. A snapshot shows her smiling in a strappy satin dress, standing in an upstairs bedroom beside a rippling column of white air.

THAT COLUMN OF WHITE AIR IS thought to be the ghost of Merchant's House, and the wonder is that there is thought to be only *one* ghost in residence. When Seabury Tredwell moved into the house, which in 1835 was on the northernmost border of developed Manhattan, he brought with him his wife, six daughters, two sons, and four servants. Eight members of the family died in the house, in the canopied bedsteads that still occupy the rooms today, on bedding that is still on display, wearing clothes that were carefully stored in the attic and are still intact. As was usual at the time, the women of the house washed the dead and prepared them for burial, and then the men carried the bodies downstairs on a board and laid them out in the front parlor. The dead were mourned in the very rooms where they had played the piano, dined, and received visitors when they were alive. After the funerals, widows wore "full mourning"—black dresses covered in black crepe—for a year and a day; daughters dressed similarly, graduating from pure black to black with lavender or gray accents as full mourning gave way to "half mourning." Death might not have been proud, but it was stylish.

GERTRUDE TREDWELL, SEABURY'S youngest child, who was born in the house in 1840 and died in 1933 in the bed she was born in, is presumed to be the ghost of Merchant's House, because she is thought to be the only family member with a grievance deep enough to last beyond the grave. As the story goes, when Gertrude was a young woman, she fell in love with a doctor named Louis Walton. Walton was a Roman Catholic, and Seabury Tredwell, who was a devout and image-conscious Episcopalian paterfamilias, forbade his daughter to marry Walton or even to have anything to do with him. Gertrude had no choice but to obey her father, and she remained a spinster for the rest of her long life. If you walk between the upstairs bedrooms of the house, where the women of the family spent most of their time talking, writing, and doing needlepoint, you will see a small trapdoor carved into the floorboards. That trapdoor hides a ladder to the cellar. Some people speculate that Gertrude crept out to the back garden at night to meet with her lover in secret by the back wall that bordered the apple orchards of the neighboring Astor estate. It was a sad affair; so sad that many people think Henry James used it as the basis of his novel *Washington Square*; so sad that, more than 150 years later, Gertrude has not yet gotten over it.

KENNETH LOYAL SMITH BECAME THE curator at the Merchant's House Museum this summer, and he is currently overseeing the costuming of the mannequins throughout the house for the mourning exhibition. He leads the way upstairs to the haunted bedroom, which contains a mannequin that is richly arrayed in sumptuous mourning dress. "It's supposed to be bad luck to keep mourning clothes," Smith observes, as he lightly touches a stiff crepe veil that falls over a pleated, ruched black silk bodice and gently skims a flirty, backward-projecting bustle. "We don't know which of the dresses belonged to which of the sisters," he says. It can't have been Gertrude's dress, because Gertrude scorned the bustle. Despite the prejudice against keeping mourning clothes, the Tredwells kept all of theirs—perhaps because, as pious Episcopalians, they scorned superstition; or perhaps because, as shrewd businessmen, they recognized that the cost of refilling their wardrobes with nonreflecting black bombazine, parasols, capes, cloaks, skirts, and gloves every time someone died would be more destructive to the family than supernatural revenge. Smith is very glad that they were so sensible. He is not afraid of mourning clothes—and he is not afraid of Gertrude.

WHEN SMITH FIRST JOINED MERchant's House this summer, he felt Gertrude's presence, but he dismissed it. After awhile, though, he decided it was rude to ignore a lady, and he mended his manners. "When I come in in the mornings, I say, 'Good morning, Gertrude!' " he explains matter-of-factly. "And when I leave, I say, 'Good night!' Ever since I started talking to her, I feel very comfortable," he says. "Gertrude likes me. She knows I came to do good to the house. I sweep the front walk, for example, which nobody else used to do." So far, Gertrude has not answered, which is fine with Smith. "I love this place," he says contentedly, touching a black-silk-covered button on the effigy's sleeve. "I want to stay here until I die." And he just might end up hanging around even longer.

LIESL SCHILLINGER

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BLUE HEART

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